

District of Squamish
PO Box 310
Squamish, BC, V8B 0A3

June 8, 2021

Re: Squamish Marine Rezoning

Dear Mayor and Council,

The Squamish Chamber of Commerce is the oldest and largest business organization in the Squamish community, representing hundreds of businesses across all sectors, including transportation, tourism, forestry and other marine related businesses. We are dedicated to enhancing the quality of life in Squamish by actively supporting business, economic growth and economic diversification.

The Squamish Chamber recognizes the potential of waterfront access for our local economy, the health and lifestyle of residents, and Squamish's unique destination positioning as a waterfront mountain town. Further to our correspondence dated May 12, we would like to confirm our perspective on the proposed marine rezoning and share some subsequent concerns we have received from the business community.

Impact on Businesses, Jobs and the Economy

The Squamish Chamber is aware of a number of concerns from the forestry industry around the impact of M4 rezoning and lack of consultation with key stakeholders. The Squamish Forest District tenure is held by First Nations and local families. There is an integrated forestry supply chain, which impacts Squamish and the wider Sea to Sky Corridor, and which is not being considered. Council's Strategic Plan identifies a focus on the economy and jobs, and so it is imperative that rezoning does not negatively impact the viability of existing operations, their resulting jobs and our collective economy.

Mamquam Blind Channel Dredging

For many decades the Mamquam Blind channel has been an important economic zone, creating jobs and supporting local businesses. The District's Marine Action Strategy refers to the important "gateway" function of the Squamish harbour for tourism as well as commercial goods transport.

Marine safety, economic development and quality of life are affected by navigation channel constraints related to lack of dredging in the blind channel, including the Upper Blind Mamquam Channel. The Squamish Chamber previously identified the need for dredging in the blind channel, which has not been significantly dredged since March 1986. Our correspondence from July 2018 shared our desire for immediate project planning and the need for an ongoing maintenance strategy.

Tourism Vision

The tourism industry sees huge potential in the Upper Blind Mamquam Channel, with a vision for a vibrant tourism hub, with safe water access linking to Rose Park, Smoke Bluffs Park, tourism operators, the amenities at the Adventure Centre and, importantly, creating connecting with the Squamish downtown. A public dock and selective navigation is required to realize this vision, which the proposed P4 would not permit.

Resident Access to Gathering Spaces, Parks and Marine Waterfront

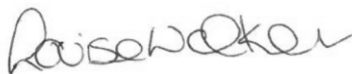
As a waterfront community, Squamish is in a crucial period, with huge opportunities to improve access to the water, whether for recreation, to drive tourism or to support the many possibilities of marine related business. The upper blind channel can also provide increased resident use of public spaces and marine waterfront areas, which are key goals in the 2019 – 2020 Council Strategic Plan. The pandemic has demonstrated the importance of outdoor spaces. There are many ways for recreation, business and the environment to work together to achieve collective goals.

Understanding Needs and Potential

It is our understanding that a number of studies are planned in the near future related to marine use, including an amenity needs and opportunities assessment. The Squamish Chamber is supportive of these studies and is keen to understand the community's needs and economic opportunities before implementing rezoning that may have negative consequences.

The Squamish Chamber would like to ensure marine rezoning does not negatively impact existing businesses that are core to our community (e.g. the forestry industry) or create barriers for future possibilities (e.g. tourism and other marine based businesses). Increased consultation, needs assessments and a further review of zoning is required to meet the diverse needs of businesses, stakeholders and residents.

Yours faithfully,



Louise Walker
Executive Director,
Squamish Chamber of Commerce