

# FRASER RIVER SUSTAINABILITY AND FLOOD MANAGEMENT

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*The following resolution has been submitted to the BC Chamber of Commerce:*

The Fraser River is a vast business generator in the Province of British Columbia. Hundreds of thousands of residents work directly or indirectly on the river, or with businesses and industry that rely on this vital waterway.

Recent abnormal weather events have served as a warning that on-going efforts to maintain the elaborate system of dykes and pumps that protect farmland, industry and residents must be undertaken by all levels of government on a proactive basis.

In addition, regular dredging of the main channel of the Fraser River must be undertaken to help avoid the threat of flooding, and to help keep the river open and navigable for shipping, commercial traffic, pleasure boating, and to further enhance the pacific fishery.

Each year, enormous amounts of debris in the form of root balls, full trees, forest trash and other materials are swept down the Fraser River. Until the advent of the debris trap, situated near Agassiz, the lower Fraser River and much of its estuary became non-navigable following the annual freshet. The trap captures the equivalent of 600 to 2400 highway logging truckloads of wood (90 – 95% of the debris is of natural origin). The net cost of operation of the trap is approximately \$640,000 per year, including costs associated with the current funding approach, i.e. funds are raised for the operation annually from a diversity of sources.



Even with the trap in operation, approximately 5000 m<sup>3</sup> of waterborne debris is generated downstream in the lower Fraser River. This study, done for the Fraser Debris Trap Operations Committee, estimates that the annual cost to manage this amount of debris and mitigate its impacts is approximately \$1.59 million per year. If the trap were decommissioned, the amount of debris flowing into the lower Fraser River and the incurred costs to manage it, would increase by at least six times to \$9.55 million per year. For an investment of \$0.64 million per year, it is estimated that at least \$7.94 million in costs per year are avoided.

## **THE CHAMBER RECOMMENDS:**

- ✓ That the Federal Government, in cooperation with the Provincial Government create a program for regular maintenance of the dykes along the Fraser River estuary, and provide for regular dredging of the main channel of the Fraser River,
- ✓ That the Federal and Provincial Government provide sustainable funding for these programs.
- ✓ That the Federal and Provincial Governments establish a permanent fund for the on-going operation and improvement of the debris trap at Agassiz, and investigate the establishment of a second trap to be situated on the lower reaches to catch debris from rivers such as the Coquitlam, Pitt and Allouette, i.e. near the Port Mann crossing.

*Submitted by the Greater Langley, Abbotsford and Maple Ridge/Pitt Meadows  
Chambers of Commerce and the Surrey Board of Trade.*