



## **Non-profit organization survey to assist in Development of the Sooke Community Economic Development Strategy**

### **1. What does your non-profit do?**

Transition Sooke is a citizen-based, volunteer, public interest group focused on co-creating a sustainable, resilient and secure community that meets the challenges of the climate emergency in the Sooke region.

Transition Sooke acts as a resource and builds awareness with the Sooke community and with different levels of government to develop creative solutions to sustainability and climate change. We hold virtual and in-person workshops and town halls, make presentations to Council and its committees, publish stories and posts in mainstream and social media, develop educational resources, host a website and Facebook page and send out a monthly newsletter. Transition Sooke supports and collaborates with other groups and individuals who share our concerns and values. We believe that the transformation to a new society must not leave anyone behind.

Some of Transition Sooke's specific initiatives and concerns are: climate action (addresses our need to both reduce greenhouse gases and adapt to the changing climate), green energy for commercial and residential buildings; fossil-fuel free transportation and infrastructure; divestment from fossil fuels; building a strong and practicable local economy and self-sufficient and secure local food and agriculture network; water awareness and conservation, pesticide education; Zero Waste Sooke (educates Sooke on how to refuse, reduce and re-use), and the Sooke Region Multi-Belief Initiative (focuses on spiritual and social needs of the community).

Formed in 2011, Transition Sooke is part of a worldwide network of Transition Towns. Sooke Transition Town Society (Transition Sooke) is incorporated under the Societies Act of B.C.

### **2. When you think about Sooke's local economy and infrastructure, what different or new things would help your non-profit organization to thrive?**

Our organization is not focused on itself thriving; rather on the community thriving. In fact, if the economy and infrastructure truly reflected our visions for a local economy (see our answers to questions #3 and #7 to have a sense of what that vision is) our organization would likely not need to exist. This would include a strong focus on local, independent businesses and different and new initiatives such as: zero waste businesses, environmental protection and resource management businesses, green energy businesses (solar and wind manufacturing, installation and maintenance,

home audits), low carbon and resilience businesses (retrofit manufacturing and construction, retail of carbon neutral materials, deconstruction and re-use of old buildings), food security businesses (small farm food production, community gardens and a commercial kitchen, irrigation and grey water systems installation), and co-ops and shared businesses (EV cars and trucks, toys, tools and heavy equipment lending).

**3. Please add any other comments you may have about Sooke's economy. Consider things like goods and services, employment and jobs in Sooke, the amount of commercial/industrial activity.**

Creating and strengthening a local economy doesn't always just happen. It takes support from local government, local business organizations like the Chamber of Commerce and the whole community.

There are some tools that might be employed to stimulate the local economy:

- establish a business incubator. This is an idea that has been raised by a number of groups in Sooke. The Chamber and the District, through its community Economic Development Office could secure a space where existing and new businesses could get support. This space could house office equipment (quality printers, copiers and high-speed internet, etc.) as well as small office spaces and meeting rooms. Mentors from local businesses could provide guidance in business planning, marketing, financial management and other skills. Assistance could be offered to help find financial support for both start-ups and existing businesses seeking to expand.
- survey of business needs such as was done with the CED Committee's recent "Business Walk" where a survey is conducted of all local businesses (home-based and outside the home) to determine what they feel they need to be more successful
- enhance the "Better Buy Sooke" campaign started by the Chamber of Commerce including community education on the importance of buying local (see answer to question #7) as well as information on the range of local businesses in the area.

There is a wide range of businesses that might do well in Sooke, especially with some assistance, including:

- home and business energy retrofits
- cooperative market spaces and mini-markets (small affordable square footage)
- food hub with a commercial kitchen and year-round markets for local farmers
- retail stores such as: toy/hobby, furniture, feed store, music, new and used books, mom and baby store (new and used), used appliances/repairs, computer repair and parts, cobbler, shoe store, outdoor store
- goods and services such as health labs, rehab, emergency care, optical lab

**4. How many staff does your organization have? Zero**

**5. How much money does your organization spend in Sooke? \$1500-\$2000/year.**

**6. Do you have volunteers? If yes, how many? We have a board of 6 people; 45 active members and 420 supporters, all volunteers.**

**7. Does your non-profit organization have any goals/strategic plans related to economic development?** The usual approach to economic development seems to be to let the community grow and as it grows more stores and other businesses will come. Most of this kind of development is businesses such as:

- big and small box stores
- franchises (usually sourcing products from outside the community)
- companies from outside Sooke looking for cheap labour
- primarily a for-profit business model

The practices of these types of businesses are not in the best interests of Sooke's existing businesses or the local economy for many reasons, including:

- unfair practices (huge inventory enabling low prices); sales gains are offset by losses at existing businesses
- decisions affecting jobs, wages, policies, contributions to the community etc. are made in distant boardrooms that have no understanding of or concern for Sooke
- increased economic leakage — too much money leaves Sooke (there are many studies that demonstrate the increased economic leakage brought on by “non-local” businesses, including ways to calculate leakage in a community)
- lack of freedom to pursue innovative ideas

There are distinct benefits of a local approach to economic development. A locally owned business is one where the community member/owner has full autonomy and decision-making authority with respect to his or her business practices. Localization has many advantages over globalization including:

- higher local economic multiplier (local businesses spend more of their money locally)
- reduced economic leakage (higher percentage of money staying in the community)
- more reliable (not inclined to move away to get a higher rate of return)
- more accountable
- less vulnerable to “global surprises” (more locally self-sufficient)
- meets the challenges of the climate emergency (reduces the number of cars on the road; both people driving to work and driving to stores outside the community)
- Sooke-specific (reflect an understanding of Sooke's specific needs, attributes, history and problems)
- community support (more inclined to contribute goods and services for local events and projects)
- more open to establishing part or all of their business as non-profit and/or co-operative

We would like to see the CED and the District of Sooke strongly emphasize the role of local, independent businesses in our Sooke region and create an economic climate that assists them to thrive.