

An Executive Summary

Squamish United Church (SUC) Resource Feasibility Study

The Board of Squamish United Church retained *Waller & Associates Ltd* to conduct a resource feasibility study to gauge the ability and inclination of the congregation's potential funding constituencies to support a capital campaign to raise approximately \$.5 million over and above current giving to build a new sanctuary space at an estimated cost of \$1.5 - \$2 million.

In the resource feasibility study it is important to test those things, which impact on raising new funds most directly. These include:

- Reputation and image of Squamish United
- Support for the new sanctuary plans (or support for the alternative plan to refurbish the current sanctuary/building) or the way the money will be spent
- Identification of the congregation's strengths and areas for improvement
- Level of support from potential givers for financial contributions
- Identification of the people who could give leadership
- Willingness of people to lead and volunteer as a campaign worker
- Timing of the campaign and other related issues
- Feasibility of reaching the financial goal
- Direction and advice

In this study process *Waller & Associates* conducted personal interviews with 39 people/couples (55 individuals) from the congregation. An interview was also conducted with the Executive Director of Sea to Sky Community Services. The interviewees represented people (from the various constituencies) the congregation would look to for financial support such as seniors, families and congregational leaders.

Reputation of the Congregation and Support for the New Sanctuary Building Plans

- ◆ 100% of the interviewees rated their personal perception and experience of the congregation as 'very good' or 'good'.
- ◆ The congregation's core strengths were identified as: a strong welcoming ministry; the quality of caring relationships/friendships; quality of preaching and pastoral care; the tremendous sense of unity and caring within the congregation and the wonderful music. Any areas for improvement were generally described as: poor facilities; the importance of attracting young families, lack of youth programming.
- ◆ 87% (or 34 interviewees) stated that the congregation's new sanctuary plans were 'very important' or 'important' to the congregation's vision for ministry and outreach in the community. These interviewees believe the new sanctuary plan is likely the best way to breathe new life into the congregation's location and future.
- ◆ 2 interviewees or 5% responded 'somewhat important'. Three (3) or 8% responded 'not important' because they see this simply as a building issue in the main and not critical to the congregation's future. All interviewees are highly motivated to have the proper church base. There is a profound respect for the integrity and competency of church leadership.

- ◆ The deepest concerns of interviewees relates to the affordability of the new sanctuary, the plan for meeting ongoing operational expenses, the perception of giving the land away and the long-term viability of SSCS. The current operational challenges accentuate the financial concerns.
- ◆ It is important to note that 26% of the interviewees believe that the refurbish alternative is ‘very important’ or ‘important’. This view is held mainly out of the conviction that the new sanctuary plan is simply not affordable and that the congregation must responsibly ‘live within its means’.
- ◆ 80% (31) said they ‘fully endorse’ or ‘partially endorse’ the new sanctuary plans as described in the Project Overview. Many interviewees who indicated ‘fully endorse’ wanted it to be clear that they endorse the concept plans as presented but not necessarily the detailed design. The 20% or 8 interviewees who chose ‘do not endorse’ or made ‘no comment’ either expressed strong reservations about the size and scope and costs of the building plans or are very strong supporters of the refurbishment plan. There is sufficient endorsement of the new sanctuary plans to move forward.
- ◆ 90% of the interviewees said that they agree with the plan to raise the required funds through a capital campaign with 10% believing the campaign would be positively received and 72% believing there would likely be a ‘mixed’ response to a campaign.
- ◆ The key question on people’s minds is whether the new sanctuary plan can be funded.

Potential Support from Givers

- ◆ 80% (approx.) or 31 of the interviewees said they would personally support making a gift to the campaign for the new sanctuary building plans and approx. 70% stated that their financial support would be a ‘high priority’ or ‘worthy of support’.
- ◆ 44% (or 17 interviewees) believe SUC has the ability to raise \$.5 million over a 5-year pledge period and Counsel believes this could be accelerated to be raised over a 3-year pledge campaign. 18% believe the congregation does not have the ability to raise these funds.
- ◆ 28 interviewees shared the range of gift that they might consider giving if Squamish United were to move forward into a campaign. These indications of financial support totalled a low range of \$170,100 and a high range of \$251,500 in pledged gifts. These are not commitments.

Potential Leaders and Campaign Volunteers

- ◆ 31 (56%) of the interviewees said they would work on campaign leadership or consider doing so.
- ◆ 13 people were identified as individuals who could give top level leadership to the campaign
- ◆ 22 people (40%) said they would be willing to be trained to visit others on behalf of the church in a campaign situation.

Plan and Timing for the Proposed Campaign

- ◆ 74% (approx. 29) of the interviewees think Squamish United should proceed with a campaign immediately. 26% of the interviewees either believe SUC should not proceed or are ‘uncertain’ or indicated ‘no comment’.
- ◆ Over 38% of the interviewees said that they would consider including Squamish United in their estate planning.

Consultant Recommendations

- ◆ **It should be kept in mind that this study is not intended to solely reveal specific potential givers, or specifically, how the goal will be attained, but rather what the potential for support would be.** Based on the overall results, the economic climate, the promising financial leadership indicated in the study, the limited number of identifiable givers to the church, the age of the potential givers, the importance of raising the funds over a three-year pledge period and not a five year pledge period, the concern for the financial plan/operational budget and increased operational expenses and the encouraging support indicated for the new sanctuary building plans, it is Fundraising Counsel's opinion that a minimum campaign objective of \$300,000 in pledges/gifts over 3 years could be attained. However, providing that the recommendations from this study report are fully implemented, the maximum that could be raised in a well-organized campaign that includes the broader community's participation should be in the range of \$500,000. This amount does not include the potential for support from the United Church national office or from Presbytery or from local special event fundraising. Funding from these sources is very difficult to quantify at this time but a further \$200,000 may not be an unreasonable guestimate. There is tremendous potential for planned gifts.
- ◆ The campaign target will be challenging and only feasible if the following conditions are met: a strong and widely accepted Case for Support must be presented; a committee prepared to lead by example must be appointed; and a feasible working plan must be developed and followed.
- ◆ Counsel believes the congregation has the capacity to raise significantly more than the proposed campaign minimum objective of \$300,000. Congregational leaders need to present a financial plan that builds the confidence and responds to the concerns of all members of the congregation and demonstrates the viability and sustainability of the new sanctuary. The Board will need to look at how best to proceed with the new sanctuary building plans and establish a campaign goal at the earliest possible date.
- ◆ Waller & Associates recommends that Squamish United Church embark on a capital campaign to be conducted in phases over the next few months once the decision on the new sanctuary building plans has been confirmed.
- ◆ That approval to proceed with a campaign be sought from the entire congregation.
- ◆ That professional consultant support be retained to give assistance with campaign implementation.