



The Voice of Business in Hawaii

MONDAY REPORT - From Chamber President Jim Tollefson – September 24, 2007

A sustainable economy supports a sustainable Hawaii

An eye opener for me this past week was when a question was asked of 9 high school students, did they see themselves living in Hawaii when they reach 35. Although as business leaders we are aware of the brain drain, what was surprising was that not one student answered yes. Their explanation was that they did not believe the opportunities for quality jobs, housing and a high quality of life were now or going to be available in the future.

What will happen to Hawaii's businesses if our children, meaning our future workforce, continue to leave the state? Even now businesses are finding it a major challenge to find quality workers. This is a clear indication of how important it is, as we evaluate the draft of the Hawai'i 2050 Sustainability Plan, that we focus on sustainable economic development by diversifying our economy and working to become globally competitive. This is what enables us to live, work and play in Hawaii. We must set goals within this plan that provide a future and insure a high quality of life to not only keep our children here, but to bring those who have left back home. How can we do this?

We view the continued success of tourism, construction, the military and agriculture as fundamental to our state's future. Although it is imperative we continue to concentrate on sustaining these areas, at the same time, we must diversify our economic base in other industries such as high tech, biotechnology, aqua culture, diversified agriculture media, communications etc. to not only provide job opportunities but to support economic self sufficiency. Also, we must continue to attract outside capital and resources to our state. This is critical to the overall health of our economy and is an important component to the sustainability or "sustainable growth" of our state.

The bottom line is a healthy economy provides a revenue base for our social and environmental systems, which includes everything from public education to natural resource protection, care for the elderly and maintenance of our infrastructure. The concept of sustainable economic development is central to the achievement of sustainable social and environmental systems. Economic development underlies and is essential to a high quality of life. A sustainable Hawaii cannot occur without a sustainable economy.

Public meetings will be held throughout islands regarding the draft Hawai'i 2050 Sustainability Plan. I want to encourage the business community and all of Hawaii's citizens to get involved in the process. Achieving a sustainable Hawaii is everyone's responsibility and critical to the future of every citizen and the generations that follow.