

## **Report of the Capital Regional District's Economic Development Commission**

For May/June Distribution

### **Write MOM**

Many Opinions Matter(MOM). As we follow our agendas and myriad of meetings we often forget to ask, "What do you think?" Many Opinions Matter, your opinion matters. Let us know. Your priorities may differ from our focus on broadband, trails, water transit or agriculture. Give us a reality check. Contractors may think the costs of permits and regulation more important. Or elder care may sit high on your wish list. Taxes? Roads? Let us know write MOM, at [www.sustainableislands.com](http://www.sustainableislands.com).

### **Broadband Initiative**

Mike Hoebel, Peter Midgley, and Brian Crumblehume, members of the EDC's communication sub-committee or Broad Band Working Group, have prepared a report on the status of the plan to improve Internet access on Mayne and Galiano Islands. The full report may be found on our web site [www.sustainableislands.com](http://www.sustainableislands.com).

Three elements compose the report: Beacon Wireless capital investment, SaturnaNet's improved capacity, and Rogers Communication's Galiano proposal. Beacon Wireless serving Salt Spring, Mayne and Galiano is in the process of seeking to fund an upgrade to the later isles. SaturnaNet, an island co-op, is increasing its capacity and may have excess capacity to assist Beacon in its provision of service. Rogers Communications has proposed a new tower and improved Internet and cellular service on Galiano Island. The outcome of the Rogers proposal is subject to both Islands Trust Local Trust Committee and Industry Canada deliberations in May.

### **Chamber of Commerce Engagement**

The EDC has met with the Chambers on Salt Spring (John Cade) and Galiano (Richard Dewinetz) Islands to tap into and to address their concerns. They include: Islands aging population, elder support, weak population growth, diminishing employment opportunities and declining Chamber membership, limited and inexpensive housing for young families. Other concerns include poor Internet connectivity, a need to broaden the summer tourist season, restrictive zoning regulations and expensive or absent on island transit and ferries. We anticipate meeting with the Mayne and Pender Chambers over the next two months. To the extent the Commission is able we seek address and alleviate these issues.

### **Experience the Gulf Islands - ETGI**

ETGI is an initiative to boost geo-tourism on the Islands. ETGI is an initiative to boost geo-tourism, a respectful approach appropriate to our natural environment and communities. Ed Andrusiak, of Galiano, heads the effort. His team has developed the proposal document, is creating an ETGI logo, is developing visitor and business opportunities, and is establishing funding for priorities, specifically an overall plan, and path development. ETGI seeks to connect all the Islands including Salt Spring. To that end a demonstration trail is underway on Mayne Island and support from the all the Islands' Chambers of Commerce is being sought.

The completion of trails may require access to private property the Gulf Islands Trails Society has established insurance coverage for property owners indemnifying them in the event of accident. The society also seeks to provide further benefits possibly in the form of tax credits.

In a further development, the recent BC Government's financial support of trails in the Okanagan has motivated the Commissioners to pursue funding for the Experience the Gulf Islands trails.

### **Le Tour des Iles**

George 'Woot Woot' Harris, Galiano Island's dynamic commissioner and Island Trustee, is heading the Tour des Iles, an inter-island visitation June 18th to 21<sup>st</sup>. He is supported by the Commission and some Chambers with GITS, Gulf Islands Trail Society as lead sponsor. He has arranged for frequent shuttles between all the Gulf Islands – Salts Spring, Galiano, Mayne, Saturna and the Penders. George notes "this time coincides with Galiano's free golf week and the Tour des Isles Invitational Golf Tournament and salmon dinner on June 19". The public will be able to travel by foot and shuttle buses on all the Islands by shuttle voyages that are less than 15 minutes apart.

### **Docks**

While wharves are the direct responsibility of the Harbour Commissioners, the EDC wishes to point out uncommitted resources in the Harbour's budget will be used to upgrade the CRD docks in the Gulf Islands in the coming year. Sheila Midgley and Ian Dow may take credit for uncovering the available capital. A working group will meet at the Galiano Inn

on May 20 to create a plan for the improvements. The parking solution at Montague is part of this multi-agency comprehensive plan.

**SGI - Food and Agricultural Strategy**

Derek Masselink, of Masselink Environmental Design, conducted community meetings early spring to assess the state of agriculture on the Islands. MED will create a blueprint for the next phase to improve farming here. The report is slated for completion at year end for presentation to the Board of the CRD. Michael Dunn is the volunteer project manager, assisted by a volunteer member from each of the Islands.

**On Island Buses**

The Mayne Island pilot bus project has been in operation for the last 28 months, supported by volunteer drivers and donors. The system is close to breakeven. Pender Island's bus project initiated by Andrea Mills is under consideration. Ian Dow, our commissioner from Mayne has agreed to mentor the Pender project. Galiano will be crafting on transit plans. Under the leadership of Paul Brent, Saturna is running a successful all volunteer bus crew.

**Inter-Island Transit**

In an effort to support the initiative of "Experience the Gulf Islands", The Commission has met twice with Kevin Lorette, CRD's General Manager/Planning and Protective Services to develop a plan for greater inter-island passenger and commercial services complementing BC Ferries.

This is in response to the survey conducted last year supportive of more communication with all the Gulf Islands and with Sidney directly. It is also a response to a need to move agricultural products between Islands and to Vancouver Island. Additionally, direct transportation to Sidney may be considered desirable in the eyes of many Islanders for the purposes of shopping, medical services, entertainment and further travel. At this point we can say only that the plan is under development.

**Miners Bay, Mayne Island**

To advance the possibility of inter-island transit, the EDC has approved a wave study at Miners Bay, Mayne Island. Ian Dow will research the cost of a floating breakwater to protect the coast and docklands. On May 27, he will host an expert on such systems and will craft a funding request.

**Southern Gulf Islands Economic Development Commission Budget**

Under the management of Dave Howe, our Director and Vice Chair of the CRD, the EDC has an annual budget of \$40,000. David Book of Pender Island has crafted a 2015 budget to hold expenditures below that upper limit.

For additional information about the Commission's activities please reference our web site [www.sustainableislands.com](http://www.sustainableislands.com).

**Leigh Pullen**  
**SGI EDC – Chair**  
**Pender Island Commissioner**