

Cortes Island (Area I) Regional Director's Report

Just about two weeks has passed since the first major wind storm of the season parked itself over Campbell River, Quadra, Cortes, Lund and the Comox Valley. I've experienced a lot of storms in the 30+ years I've lived on Cortes; however, the wind had a particular sound - a low rumble rather like the sound of a locomotive - which I had never heard before. Waking Monday morning, I was greeted by spaghetti-like hydro lines and immediately figured we would be without power for 4-5 days. Service was restored to my neighborhood early Friday afternoon and life returned to normal, once again.

This powerful, destructive storm was most disruptive to islander's way of life. A different sort of storm has been brewing since July, which has the same inherent qualities. The storm of which I speak is the provincial government's dictated division of the Comox Strathcona Regional District (CSRD).

Comox-Strathcona Regional District Division

By now everyone should know that in July the provincial government dictated the CSRD be divided by December 31. This was done with no consultation with locally elected representatives or taxpayers. Minister Chong identified five directives the new Comox Valley Regional District is to address. All of these could easily take place under the auspices of the CSRD. The division is an unprecedented action—never before has a regional district been divided—and only now are the costs associated with the division coming to light. Myers Norris Penny (MNP) was commissioned to examine how the regional services delivered by the CSRD might be divided. The report clearly stated that the CSRD delivers services in a cost efficient, collaborative manner. MNP, in an effort to minimize the “unavoidable costs” division would require, recommended a corporate service board be established for some services. This corporation would be insulated from elected representatives and taxpayers. I have yet to hear of anyone in support of corporate services board however, if the identified services are divided so that each new regional district administers each service separately; the “unavoidable costs” will skyrocket. And please keep in mind, folks, separation of services is the only aspect of division that has been analyzed thus far. We've only just begun to get an idea of the real costs associated with division. And I must point out that the provincial government did not investigate any other option to address the governance issues it seems to feel the CSRD is facing.

I recognize it can be a bit tough for residents to get their heads wrapped around a complex issue like this, BUT the dictated division of the CSRD will have all the destructiveness of a powerful winter storm. The key difference is it will take years, not days, for rural areas to recover from the disruption to governance and the associated unavoidable costs. Letters opposing the division of the CSRD are being written daily. If you have not written a letter yet, please give some time to this issue—today.

Now, moving to more positive initiatives.....

Beach Access Update

Development of beach access trails continues to move forward. As mentioned in earlier reports, Hayes Road is complete except for signage. The design for the Moon

Road trail has been completed and construction is well underway. However, the advent of the rainy season may create additional challenges for the final beach approach, which is steep and wet, even during the dry season. Ryan Harvey is the person doing the actual trail development. He works closely with the CSRD Park Staff to ensure the trails meet necessary standards that will be ensure safety and longevity.

Design work continues on the Seascape beach access. The steepness of the trail creates additional challenges in developing a safe, long lasting trail that won't be subject to erosion from run off. The knowledge gained at this site will be utilized in the development of the Gnat Road trail in the Squirrel Cove area.

I understand everyone is anxious to have their neighborhood trail developed, however, limited resources, both financial and time, as well as the weather, affect the development schedule. Progress is ongoing and will continue into 2008. Please be mindful that any unauthorized trail development on either the Seascape or Gnat beach accesses may result in the loss of tenure. Patience with the ongoing process is most appreciated.

Skate Park Vault Toilet

The concept of installing a toilet facility at the Skate Park surfaced over a year ago. After many interesting twists and turns, I am please to announce that a single vault toilet (outhouse), which will be wheelchair accessible, will be installed at the Skate Board Park in the near future. The original goal was to have something in place last May (prior to tourist season) however, more time was needed to find a model, which met CSRD standards and remained within the budget. This facility will address the concerns associated with the lack of a toilet facility not only at the skate park but the Manson's Landing downtown area, as well. The CSRD Park Staff have worked closely with the executive of the Southern Cortes Community Association (SCCA) to find a workable solution to this particular community challenge.

Feel free to contact me about these or any other concerns at 935-6488 Monday through Friday 9:00 am to 4 pm. (No early morning, late night or weekend calls, please.) If you get the answering machine try my cell phone -- 202-6488. You can also email me anytime at brijen@oberon.ark.com.

Respectfully Submitted by Jenny Hiebert—Regional Director