

Cortes Island (Area I) Regional Director's Report

Regional District business has kept me very busy this year and I hope to tidy all the loose ends today so I can move on to all the holiday activities. I haven't started any holiday preparations yet! No decorating, no presents, no baking—zippo! However, a welcome bit of holiday colour has blossomed forth in my house. Earlier this year I purchased a Double Red Dragon amaryllis bulb. The first flower has opened and it is the perfect festive red!

Comox-Strathcona Regional District Division

Minister Chong scheduled a meeting on December 3 in Victoria to discuss the division of the Comox Strathcona Regional District. Weather conditions were very poor and many directors, myself included, were unable to make the journey south. Five rural directors braved the treacherous roads and managed to attend in Victoria. A conference call was organized so all director's were able to speak on behalf of their communities. Minister Chong listened to the discussion and stated she would give careful consideration to all the positive suggestions that were expressed. I have just received her promised response. Below is a brief synopsis of the ten points addressed in her letter.

- 1. The Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD) and Strathcona Regional District (SRD) will be incorporated on Feb. 15, 2008.**
2. Regional Water Supply—Letters Patent for the CVRD will create a water supply commission with political representation to mirror the new regional board excepting Area K. The commission will review existing CV water supply services by December 31, 2008. I will also develop a regional water supply service plan focused on coordinated management of water supply service, including demand management and watershed protection by Dec. 31, 2009
3. Regional Growth Strategy (RGS)--RGS for the CVRD is to be initiated by March 2008 and completed by Dec. 31, 2010.
4. Providing Water and Sewer Services to Rural Areas--member municipalities of both new regional districts are expected to relax their policies on provision of water and sewer to properties outside their boundaries. Further direction will be provided early 2008.
5. Harmonized Development Cost Charges (DCC)—Minister Chong will be seeking legislation at Spring 2008 session to further this CVRD objective. This requires development of a common capital plan and would reflect Official Community Plans and ultimately the RGS. Each jurisdiction will continue to levy its own charges but will use a common information base and will reflect all costs of development.
- 6. Community Planning in Unincorporated Areas--CVRD must provide SRD planning service for 2008-2009. There will be no major changes to the planning budget or staffing for two years. Arrangements for 2010 and beyond are outlined in #7. Minister Chong expects that, with the new regional governance framework in place, there will be more collaboration between municipal council and EAD's on planning matters!**

7. Managing Transition and Mitigating Potential Cost increases--Transitional years--Administrative responsibility stays the same for 2008 & 2009--unless there is an agreement by both Boards. Strathcona Gardens is the only exception, which will have CVRD administration for 2008 only, unless parties agree otherwise. The Ministry will pay the costs of an Administrator for the SRD for 2008, which will ensure early discussions between the two new regional districts on service delivery approaches. Other administrative costs will be covered by the Ministry's with ongoing unconditional grants. The ministry will also pay for a service facilitator to assist both regional districts in designing service delivery beyond transitional years. **This facilitator will be mandated to assist with the creation of an EAD services committee in each RD, municipal participation in EA planning, including possible partial participation agreements; and potential for CVRD to continue delivering services to SRD beyond transitional years.** The ministry will monitor discussions and provide additional financial assistance (if appropriate) or assistance to implement the new service delivery arrangements. Ongoing Financial Assistance for CVRD will be \$776,000 over five years, and \$922,000 for the SRD over five years which represents \$1.1 million more than the CSRD would have received if it had not been divided.
8. Oyster Bay-Buttle Lake (Area D) will remain in the SRD.
9. **Governance Structure—The voting unit for both regional districts will be lowered to 1,500, which will entitle Courtenay and Comox 1 new director each and Campbell River 2 new directors effective Feb. 15, 2008. Meanwhile, in the CVRD, Baynes Sound (Area A) and Denman-Hornby (Area K) will be amalgamated as will Kyuquot-Nootka (Area G) and Sayward-Blodel (Area H) in the SRD. These amalgamations are effective November 2008. These amalgamations and altering of the voting unit favor municipalities and penalize rural areas. After the 2008 election the CVRD will have 6 municipal and 3 rural directors. The SRD will have 9 municipal and 4 rural directors.**
10. Infrastructure Projects for Areas A & D will be addressed by Dale Wall under separate letter

It is quite clear that Minister Chong did not give any real consideration to any of the thoughtful arguments opposing division, the creative alternatives to division, or concerns rural directors and constituents expressed. Clearly the only democratic process acknowledged by the current provincial government is during an election. Quite frankly, rural governance issues have been worsened in both new regional districts. The ramifications of the outlined changes will echo for many years to come.

Thanks to everyone that took the time to write a letter opposing this restructuring by division. Letters of protest are now in order.

Regional Chair and Vice Chair Elections

The Comox-Strathcona Regional District (CSRD) board and Regional Hospital Board are made up of elected rural electoral area directors and municipal directors

appointed by their councils. Directors serve for three years and elect a chair and vice-chair for each Board every December. The newly elected executive offices reflect a good balance between rural/municipal and north/south interests.

At the recent inaugural regional board meeting Craig Anderson, Mayor of Gold River, was elected Chair and Barbara Price, Director for Lazo North (Area B), was elected vice-chair. They will serve in these positions until the CSRD is dissolved into two new regional districts on February 15, 2008. I hope to see the return of respectful procedure and debate during board meetings. Inaugural elections for the new regional districts will take place on February 15, 2008.

The Regional Hospital Board elected Fred Bates, Mayor of Cumberland to serve as Chair and Brenda Leigh, Oyster Bay/Buttle Lake (Area D) as Vice Chair. The hospital board will continue to examine the regional hospital concept as well as dealing with existing remote health facilities, including the Cortes Medical Clinic.

Advisory Planning Commission Appointments

At the December Board meeting Paul Brewer, Joe Cliffe, Bruce Ellingsen, Frances Guthrie, Julia Rendall, Kristin Scholfield-Sweet, and Doug Weyler were appointed to the Cortes Advisory Planning Commission. I truly appreciate the thoughtful ideas and comments these individuals bring to the planning issues facing our island community. Thanks for the interest and willingness to serve as a commission member.

Skate Park Vault Toilet

By now many of you have noticed the new road next to the Skate Board Park. This is the access needed for the manufactured single vault toilet delivery truck, which **was** scheduled to be installed last week. Ian Disney was been working with the SCCA to prepare the site and was waiting to finish the excavation needed to install the concrete vault (holding tank) on the date of delivery and everyone was looking forward to completing this project. Unfortunately, that day the crank truck needed to deliver the unit “blew” its engine. We are awaiting confirmation of the new arrival date from the Nanaimo manufacturer McKay Precast.

The division of the regional district has made this year particularly very challenging and stressful. The holiday offers a much-needed break from all things remotely related to regional district business. I look forward to spending the next two weeks enjoying family and friends in a relaxed holiday atmosphere. Anyone having questions regarding regional district matters should contact the Courtenay office at 1-800-334-6007. Regional district staff will be pleased to assist you. I will once again be available after January 2.

Wishing you all a joyous holiday season and a delightful new year.

Respectfully Submitted by Jenny Hiebert—Regional Director