

Gulf Islands' Island Tides

Giving The Coast A Community Voice For 27 Years



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Firefighter cadets learn many skills at a six-day spring break camp.

Photo: Greg Hankin

Boost for Pender's firefighter training facility

At the Saturday, March 25, closing luncheon and awards ceremony for Firefighting Cadet Camp 2017, BC's Fire Commissioner Gordon Anderson announced that Pender Island Fire/Rescue would receive \$370,000 from the provincial government to complete its live fire training building.

The announcement received a joyful standing ovation from a hundred attendees: fire cadets, trainers, volunteers, firefighters, board members, parents and cadets' siblings. It topped off six days of strenuous, brain-busting, and courage-testing work by the 20 teens putting in 100 hours at Gulf Islands Fire/Rescue Cadet Camp.

The live fire training ground is already well on its way to completion, with several fire scenarios 'props' such as a vehicle, a dumpster, a propane tank, and a flammable liquids pool in place. All are propane-fueled from a central control station, making fire scenarios quickly repeatable and maximizing training time. The 3-storey live fire training building will complete the facility, which is available to all southern islands for initial training and current skill maintenance programs.

Spring Break Firefighting Cadet Camp

This year's cadet camp included fourteen boys and six girls between the ages of 15 and 18. The teens participating were from Victoria, Sidney, Saanichton, North Saanich, Brentwood Bay, Delta, Pender Island, and Salt Spring Island.

Prior to the funding announcement, amazed parents

had spent the morning watching their youngster demonstrate fire extinguishing and rescue exercises at the firehall. The already completed in-ground concrete basement of the live fire building was used for one of the scenarios, a self-contained breathing apparatus obstacle course. Here small teams of fire cadets completed an exercise, crawling—blindfolded, wearing bulky turn-out gear and breathing apparatus—through an obstacle course representing fire hazards likely to be encountered in a smoke-filled building. All the while the youngsters were following strict protocols and looking out for their team mates.

Spring break firefighter camp for teens was created on Pender 14 years ago by Pender Island Fire/Rescue Deputy Chief Mike Dine, who says firefighter camp 'is a great way to challenge teens mentally and physically'. Since 2005, seven Gulf Islands Fire/Rescue Cadet Camp have been held on Pender. Rigorous instruction includes structure fires, auto extrication, high-angle rope rescue, search and rescue, medical first response, and related skills, totaling 100 hours of training. Students who complete the training, qualify for 100 work experience hours, equivalent to four highschool credits.

Pender Fire Hall #1

Community support and fire protection board foresight created a facility fit for purpose when the North Pender's new Firehall #1 was completed in 2001. It now offers facilities to other southern islands' fire services, as well as protecting North and South Pender.

Although there are a handful of firefighting cadet

programs across Canada, it is the Gulf Islands Fire/Rescue cadets who live, work, and play with firefighters and community mentors 24-hours-a-day for six consecutive days. 'This level of immersion and intensity has shown remarkable results. The camp is made possible through hundreds of volunteer hours contributed by more than 40 firefighters and support crews from Pender and Salt Spring Fire/Rescue. Three graduates of the cadet program, now all qualified firefighters, returned to lend a hand this year,' said Deputy Chief Dine.

Pender Island Fire/Rescue Chief Charlie Boyte commented, 'Every cadet camp brings us a new appreciation for the commitment, passion and determination of the teens in our local communities and further afield. As well, it is truly exceptional to see how the mentorship of caring community firefighters and volunteers, with many decades of service, impacts the lives of our youth.'

The southern Gulf Islands have seven fire departments that respond to hundreds of emergency calls each year. They include structure and wild fires, auto accidents, medical calls, rope rescue, hazardous materials spills, boating disasters, missing persons, and other 911 related events.

Their services also include public education, fire prevention, and inspection programs. To learn more about the fire departments that facilitate the cadet camp, [CLICK HERE](#) and [CLICK HERE](#). [CLICK HERE](#) and [CLICK HERE](#) to watch video compilations from previous camps. 📺



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News Digest

Animal Liability Act

Answering the advocacy of two pet-owners who lost their therapy dog Button in an aggressive attack by another dog, BC Green Party leader Andrew Weaver introduced the Animal Liability Act, 2017 and the Community Charter Amendment Act, 2017 in the BC legislature.

The proposed Animal Liability Act is modeled on similar legislation in Manitoba that makes animal-owners directly liable for any damages caused by their pets. The Community Charter Amendment Act would add legal clarity and humane treatment standards to Section 49, which regulates special powers in relation to dangerous dogs. Consideration for the circumstances around a dog attack are introduced, as are standards of care for dogs held in longterm impounds. For seriously ill dogs in need of veterinary care, a compassionate release clause is included.

Under the current laws, serious dog bites can result in the seizure or death of the dog, but the owner does not necessarily face any charges, and is not responsible for any damages.

The Animal Liability Act will not put full liability on pet owners if their dog acts out of self defence or in response to aggression.

Shell Sells Undeveloped Oilsands

Royal Dutch Shell has announced that it has signed two agreements to sell its undeveloped oilsands interests in Canada for a net consideration of US\$7.25 billion.

Under the first agreement, the Anglo-Dutch energy giant will reduce its 60% interest in the the Athabasca Oil Sands Project to 10% and sell its 100% interest in the Peace River Complex in-situ assets, including Carmon Creek, and a number of undeveloped oilsands leases in Alberta to a subsidiary of Canadian Natural Resources Ltd.

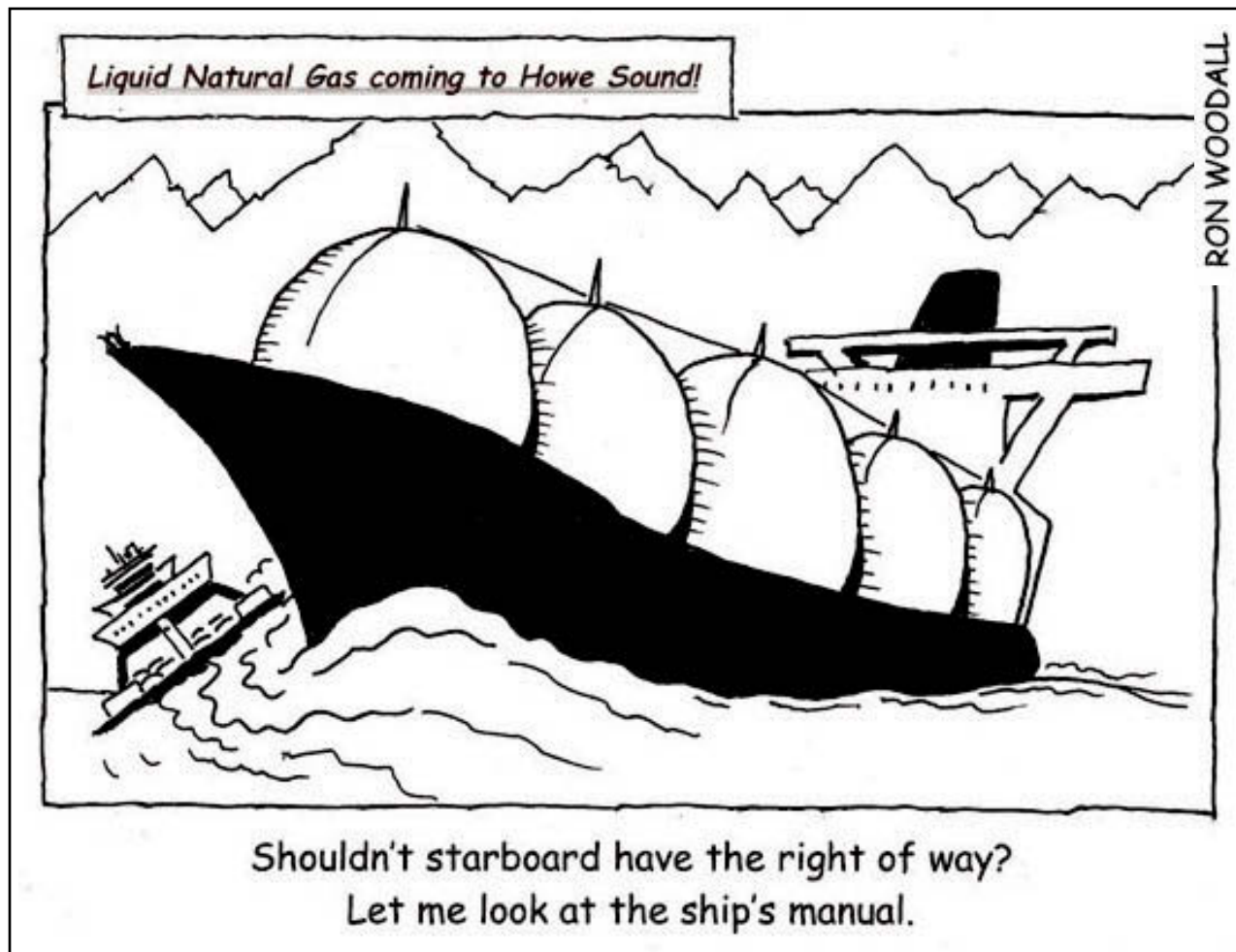
Shell says it would remain the operator of the project's Scotford upgrader and Quest carbon capture and storage project. Canadian Natural Resources would be expected to operate Athabasca's upstream mining assets.

According to Shell, the deal is worth approximately US\$8.5 billion (CAN\$11.1 billion), comprised of \$5.4 billion in cash plus around 98 million Canadian Natural shares currently valued at \$3.1 billion.

Under the second agreement, which is also subject to regulatory approvals, Shell and Canadian Natural Resources will jointly acquire and own Marathon Oil Canada Corp, which holds a 20% interest in the Athabasca Oil Sands Project, for \$1.25 billion each.

Huu-ay-aht First Nations Approve Sarita LNG

Citizens of the Huu-ay-aht First Nations voted 70% in support of the proposed LNG project to be located in Sarita Bay, 10 kilometres north of Bamfield and about 70 kilometres southwest of Port Alberni. This approval marks the earliest point in project development that a First Nation has agreed to an LNG facility in their territory. The Sarita Bay project, currently in its preliminary engineering and conceptual design stage, is owned by Steelhead



LNG, who are also proposing the Malahat LNG facility in the Saanich Inlet at Bamberton.

Liberals Kill Public Transit Tax Credit

In a recent decision by Finance Minister Bill Morneau, Canada's Public Transit Tax Credit policy has been eliminated. The credit, which was introduced by the Conservatives in 2006, provided a 15% rebate for monthly and weekly transit pass users. In some cities, these credits can be worth as much as \$200 a year.

According to Morneau, the tax credit was eliminated because it wasn't meeting its goal of increasing ridership. The credit cost the federal government at least \$170 million a year, which Morneau says would be better spent investing in public transit infrastructure.

A study by the University of Ottawa found that the tax credit did in fact increase ridership, but not by much—the credit increases the share of commuters who use transit by between 0.25 and 1 percentage points nationwide.

The tax credit will be phased out in July.

Enbridge Cuts 1,000 Staff

Energy giant Enbridge Inc is cutting 1,000 staff, less than a month after the company's takeover of Spectra Energy Corp. The combined company currently employs around 17,000 people, so the layoffs amount to about 6% of employees. Enbridge says these cuts are directly due to the merger, and are not an indication of the overall economy.

'Enbridge has taken the difficult but necessary step to address the overlap in the combined company's organizational structure,' said spokesman Todd Nogier in a statement.

These latest cuts come after the October elimination of 530 positions within Enbridge due to an organizational review.

Anti-Keystone XL Pipeline Petition

After nearly six years of protest and discussion surrounding the Keystone XL tar sands pipeline, US President Donald Trump has issued a federal permit for the project. Environmental organizations have been protesting the cross-border pipeline for years, and the delay of six years has prevented the transportation of millions of barrels of oil—the proposed pipeline has a capacity of 800,000 barrels a day.

350.org has organized a petition urging Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to oppose Trump's approval. [CLICK HERE](#) to sign the petition.

Orca Protection Plan

The federal government has released a new 'Species at Risk Act action plan to ensure the future of the northern and southern resident orca populations'. Resident orca population on the southern coast of BC is down to 78 members, after the recent deaths of two prominent members of the J-Pod.

The low number of orcas surviving in the Salish Sea is due to several factors. Pollution is a large part of the problem, along with declining Chinook salmon populations, entanglement in lost fishing gear, and noise pollution that confuses killer whales and causes collisions with ships.

Orcas communicate over vast underwater distances using sound waves sent and received through specialized membranes in their heads, jaws and blowholes. Ever-increasing commercial and military shipping sonar interferes with their ability to communicate, navigate, and hunt for salmon.

The Species at Risk action plan commits to investigate strategic fisheries measures and other management actions to implement 'where appropriate', in an effort to secure returning populations of Chinook salmon and other fish. It also commits to 'develop and recommend implementation of best practices, guidelines, regulations, or other measures to minimize or eliminate physical and acoustic disturbance to Resident Killer Whales' and 'more investigation of area specific and boating regulations that reduce acoustic impact'.

While the plan is a first step, according to World Wildlife Fund Canada, it does not go far enough.

'The plan should call for meaningful action and strong measures to secure availability of food for orcas, including site-specific fisheries closures when necessary,' the WWF said in a statement. 'The plan should call for quantifiable targets and actions to reduce physical and acoustic disturbances, and contaminants, for each impact, and the cumulative effects of those impacts.'

The plan, it says, 'does not include the strong, immediate actions that would help this species teetering on the edge of survival.'

Orca Awareness Month is coming up this June, with celebrations planned all across the west coast. Activists will be campaigning for better protection of this unique species—working to release captive whales and to establish whale protection zones in the Salish Sea.



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Photo: Jim Hebert

Gabriola's IRATE (Island Residents Against Taker Expansion) was joined by Luke Wallace, an activist and musician from Vancouver, on March 18 to collect donations for the Pull Together campaign. Pull Together aims to raise 500k to cover the cost of legal challenges led by T'sleil-Watuth and Coldwater Nations against the Kinder Morgan TMX pipeline. Time to provide financial support to First Nations legal cases, they say. [CLICK HERE](#) to learn more. You can donate online to the IRATE Pull Together team, [CLICK HERE](#). The rally was followed by a screening at Gabriola's Community Hall of *Frightened* sponsored by GAFA - Gabriolans Against Freighter Anchorage.

AROUND THE ISLANDS

Building Pender's Edu-Tourism Economy

The BC Rural Dividend Fund has granted \$77,000 to a local organization aiming to grow Pender Islands' economy. The money has been awarded to the Southern Gulf Islands Community Resources Center, a nonprofit with the mandate to provide individuals, families and organizations in the Southern Gulf Islands with information and resources for housing, employment, education, training, health, and social services.

The group will be using the funding for a new project, *Building Pender Islands' Economy Through Edu-Tourism*. The aim of the project is to harness local talent to build a framework for social and economic sustainability for the Penders.

Silver Maynes Events - Allan Evans

All the comments I heard about the Silver Mayne's Spring Fling dinner on March 8 were complimentary and Eileen Verheul, who organized it, deserves our grateful applause.

All that was missing was the reluctant spring. However, late snowdrops and early tête-à-tête daffodils bloomed bravely together, defying the temperature.

There is another trip to Chemainus on April 26, to take in the play, 'Two Pianos, Four Hands'—Ted and Richard long to become classical pianists, but they must navigate the obstacles in their path to fame and glory.

Then, there is a May or June trip, combining

Butchart Gardens in the morning, where we shall have lunch, followed by a trip to the whisky distillery in Sidney.

Silver Maynes' Plant Sale is on May 13, the Saturday just before Mother's Day and is combined with the Mother's Day Tea in the Ag Hall. It is not too early to dig up a few plants you can spare from your garden and make them ready to donate for sale.

New Food Rescue Distribution Centre

A group of Victoria organizations have announced the opening a new facility dedicated to increasing the quantity and quality of food that is available to the estimated 50,000 food-insecure people in the region. The facility will work to divert 2,000 kilograms of perishable food from the landfill per day. The food, donated by Thrifty Foods grocery store, will be transported to Food Share Network partners and food-insecure people living in the Capital Region.

The Food Rescue Distribution Centre is a collaboration between Rotary Clubs of Greater Victoria, Thrifty Foods, The Victoria Foundation, the 40+ members of the Food Share Network and their operational partner, The Mustard Seed Street Church.

Fourteen per cent of all people living in the region are food insecure, with only 20,000 of this 50,000 using the services of emergency hampers and meal programs. This leaves 30,000 people in the region struggling to feed themselves and their families.

Parksville's Cut The Plastics Project

Communities Protecting Our Coast (CPOC) has begun a new project. In January, after screening the documentary *A Plastic Ocean: We Need a Wave of Change*, the very active group of mid-Vancouver Island locals decided to focus on the problem of waste plastics in the environment.

On March 12, members met in the Cedar Room of Parksville Community Conference Center to find out what they each could do to reduce one-time use plastics. Attendees were asked to bring along any examples of plastic waste they did not know what to do with.

Social Network for Young Patients

Victoria General Hospital will become the first community hospital on the west coast of Canada to join Upopolis, an innovative social support platform and networking tool for young patients to safely and securely access kid-friendly medical content and stay connected to their families, friends and schools while undergoing care. [CLICK HERE](#) to find out more.

Butterflyway

Imagine your yard or balcony garden in full bloom, alive with fluttering butterflies and buzzing bees... Now get started on making that vision a reality—buy seeds through the David Suzuki Foundation's Butterflyway Project to support pollinators.

Choose from five wildflower species. All are easy to grow, and all are tempting from a pollinator's point of view! You can add a buffet of butterfly-boosting bee balm and black-eyed Susan, give your garden some pollinator punch with echinacea and Joe-pye weed, and nourish neighbourhood bees with licorice mint.

Proceeds from the seeds you buy will support the Butterflyway Project, a citizen-led movement aimed at bringing nature home to our neighbourhoods. With your help, volunteer Butterflyway Rangers will soon be creating citizen-led pollinator pathways across Canada! [CLICK HERE](#) to find out more. 🐝


Elizabeth May, O.C. MP
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Voting Someone In—Not Out

Dear Editor:

Four years ago Saanich Gulf Islands riding was the closest three-way-race in the provincial election, which makes it pretty clear that every vote counts.

The role of the MLA is to bring forward perspectives and concerns of the people in their riding, to work with their colleagues in government, and to advocate for action on issues affecting their constituents. Each elected official's responsibility is first and foremost to their riding, rather than to the banner they campaigned under.

It's clear that voters in British Columbia have been more interested in voting a party out. Enough scandal and disapproval of leadership leads us to replace a government with their rivals. Are our memories really that short? Isn't that exactly what happened when the NDP and Glen Clark got voted out?

The only way to change the cycle is to break it—by voting differently. By voting for local representation. By voting someone in. By voting for the BC Greens.

Hugh MacCallum, Sidney

End Fossil Fuel Subsidies

Dear Editor:

While the federal budget 2017 happily included some reductions in fossil fuel subsidies, it does not go nearly far enough to help Canada achieve its weak GHG targets and start a long overdue process of decarbonizing our economy.

There is an urgent need to plan a firm and aggressive schedule to put an end to these fossil fuel subsidies. It is no longer true that jobs or our economy will be in jeopardy if you transition quickly to renewables. It has been demonstrated again and again that more jobs are created in renewables than in tar sands, where jobs have been declining substantially since 2014. Luckily, in Canada we have several opportunities for renewables, be it solar, wind, geothermal or tidal. We can build a clean economy now with long term rewarding jobs that enhance our health, well-being and environment. Fossil fuel subsidies undermine our efforts to curb GHG, including many initiatives proposed in this budget. It is high time to coordinate the right hand with the left hand.

Let's get it together! What do you say? It's time to put an end to fossil fuel subsidies once and for all.

Marcelle Roy, Salt Spring Island

Another Letter to Mr Yake About Provincial Debt & BCHydro

This letter is a second letter sent to analyst Michael Yake of Moody's credit rating agency which assigns a provincial credit rating.

Dear Mr Yake:

The taxpayers of British Columbia have become the victims of their government and public utilities ineptitude. Since 2005 when the IPPs (Independent Power Producers) and PPPs (Private Public Partnerships) were introduced as vehicles to transfer large bulks of wealth from the public purse (citizens) to private interests, the total accumulated debt has risen from about \$35 billion to an estimated \$190 billion.

My research shows that the taxpayers are now faced with the following 2016 debt commitments as follows: (please correct me if I am inaccurate as this is a layman's calculation):

- General provincial debt: \$65 billion (one of the highest in Canada);
- BCHPA (conventional debt): \$15 billion (very poor business practices);
- Deferred debt: \$5 billion (fraudulent accounting);
- Site C (estimated debt so far): \$4 billion (there is no BCUC overview, why not?);
- Independent Power Producers: \$55 billion (the contracts of IPPs are a secret and the power is often not needed);
- Private Public Partnerships: \$45 billion (these PPPs are our public infrastructure which we have backstopped with taxpayers' money); and
- BC Ferries Corporation: \$1 billion.

The grand total is estimated at \$190 billion (this is a debt obligation of \$42,220 for every man, woman and child in BC)

Note that Alberta's debt is \$16 billion and the small country of Norway with a similar population, geography and resource base to BC has a positive balance of \$700 billion.

This actual debt is camouflaged by referring to the IPPs and PPPs as contractual obligations. Again from a layman's viewpoint and a small businessman, when I sign a contract for anticipated future gain these contracts are a liability to my business until I can extinguish them. If I fail to meet these contracts it is a debt that I am obliged to pay-out. So in my definition, a contractual obligation is a *debt*. I fail to see how government is any different.

Debt is *bad* in my household and it is *bad* in my government's coffers. Remember that mortgage means an engagement until death.

The failure of government to use the BC Utilities Commission to complete an objective analysis of the future energy needs of the province, the hiring of former Enron staffers to introduce the fraudulent deferral accounts and exaggerated energy demand forecasts have created the current debt crisis in BC.

In summary, unrealistic expectations are an indication of an inability to effectively plan for our future in BC. This emergency was highlighted by the former Auditor General Mr Doyle, before he vacated his position and departed to Australia.

It was up to the current Auditor General, Ms Bellringer, to ring the alarm bells concerning this emerging debacle. Unfortunately, the integrity of this office has become a casualty of party politics.

Mr Yake, it is now up to your agency to highlight this escalating financial fiasco to the people of British Columbia who are your clients.

I am requesting: confirmation of the total provincial financial obligations including outstanding contracts; a provision of a legitimate repayment plan to extinguish this escalating debt by the Province, your agency's assurance that it is operating at arm's length in assessing future financial health of BC; and a reply in writing.

Arthur A Hadland, Baldonnel

New Ferry Planning

Dear Editor:

The second 'Salish' Class ferry, *Salish Eagle*, has arrived and is being prepared for service. BC Ferries have a new CEO and he looks like the overdue person who will rationalize the fleet.

Fleet rationalization has been very slow to come to BCFS Inc. In my old industry, passenger commercial

aviation, the economic power of rationalization was re-discovered in the 1980s in North America.

Southwest Airlines started in earnest with the B 737-300 aircraft. They achieved a better than 50% savings in crew and maintenance costs over the 'legacy' airlines. This was translated into very low operating costs per seat mile. I could never understand why this lesson escaped the attention of the BC Ferries managers and boards.

BCFS Inc has operated about 30 different ships and for the most part they have all been one-offs. Spare parts inventory must have been out of this world and probably still is. Huge amounts of crew cross training also go with this kind of operation, especially in a union setting.

The new CEO has commissioned an examination of the BCFS Inc route system and it looks to me as if he is trying to see how much standardization he can achieve. If true then it would be reasonable to expect new but standardized designs to start being ordered. Without much thought, it could be that BC Ferries will settle on ships of about a carrying capacity of 100 cars and 300-400 passengers. At this stage that is only a very preliminary estimate.

Gabriola's ferry, which will need replacing in the next five to seven years, is a little smaller and given the population outlook for Gabriola, a new ship size greater than for 100 cars would be too much for the route and demand.

Ferry travel cost increases in recent years have suppressed demand with the effect of no to little growth of total travel demand. Complicating matters is the fact that recorded demand has been day-of-the-week and seasonally variable.

Transport companies usually address these problems by variable pricing strategies and the additional service in high-demand periods. These two management strategies seem to have escaped the attention of BC Ferries but, with new management, maybe that will change. If adding service capacity is thought to be important by BC Ferries then it would be best done using smaller ships and more service frequencies. Right now BC Ferries has three large ships that were sized by blindly over-bullish dreamers. Too much of the time these ships run close to empty, have one whole deck taken out of service, and are parked at a dock during off-peak travel periods. This produces huge waste of all operating resources.

Erik Andersen, Gabriola Island

The Kinder Morgan Pipeline Decision

Dear Editor:

When Prime Minister Trudeau announced the twinning of the Kinder Morgan pipeline from Alberta to Vancouver harbour, a large majority of BC people were shocked. The route is the worst possible course. Instead of going through the most barren, unpopulated areas, the route runs directly through the harbour of downtown Vancouver, the most densely populated part of BC, and then continues on through the Salish Sea, the most environmentally sensitive part of BC. There is no other route where one accident could cause so much harm.

Making it worse is the fact that it is not just crude oil to be transported but 'dilbit', a more dangerous product. The bitumen extracted from the Alberta tar sands needs to be diluted in order to be pumped through pipelines, hence, dilbit (diluted bitumen).

Dilbit is more inflammable than crude oil. Three railway derailments occurred in northern Ontario in 2015, resulting in explosive fires. They were carrying dilbit. Had it been crude oil, it is likely that no fires would have occurred. This more inflammable dilbit will be stored in tanks in Burnaby, not far from Simon Fraser University.

Likewise, dilbit is more toxic. The Kalamazoo oil spill in Michigan involved Alberta dilbit. The residents for a large area had to be evacuated. They were getting sick, coughing, and suffering headaches. It is not yet known whether any permanent health problems have occurred, but the dilutants in dilbit can cause skin, blood and heart disorders, and also cancer.

Imperial Oil has a data sheet regarding dilbit spills, warning: 'Keep unnecessary personnel away,



Photo: Mike Yip

A gillnetter working off Qualicum Bay. Herring spawn time is a major wildlife event in the Salish Sea. Herring gillnetting was also continued in an area just north of Nanaimo, but stocks were down and few catches were made, according to local herring expert David Ellis. Gillnet fishers are waiting for a possible Fisheries and Oceans Canada opening for gillnetting in the Gulf Islands region.

More Readers' Letters

stay up-wind, eliminate ignition sources, and wear a full-face breathing apparatus'. If anything went wrong, think of these fumes permeating Burnaby, Vancouver, North Vancouver and West Vancouver.

The plan approved by Prime Minister Trudeau includes a seven-fold increase in tanker traffic—to 400 tankers a year (carrying dilbit). Not mentioned, however, is that each of these tankers will return with the more dangerous cargo of dilutants, to be pumped back up the same pipelines to the tar sands. That makes a total of 800 tanker-trips a year—considerably increasing the risk of an accident.

But that is only part of the problem. The tankers leave Vancouver Harbour, then continue around Stanley Park, past a number of beaches, across the mouth of the Fraser River, through the Gulf Islands and on to the open Pacific—a region renowned for natural treasures.

Vancouver has 28 continuous kilometres of pathways making the waterfront accessible to all. Likewise, the islands at the mouth of the Fraser River have more pathways, largely enjoyed by birdwatchers and photographers. This area has been designated as one of BC's Important Bird Areas (IBA). It is a wintering area for bald eagles, snowy owls and blue herons, among others. It is also an important stop-over for thousands of migrating seabirds on the Pacific flyway.

The Fraser River itself has long been protected for its amazing spawning runs of all five species of Pacific salmon; the most famous being the Adams River sockeye run. An additional feature is the sturgeon fishery, now recovering after near extinction. In recent years, sturgeon have been caught (and released) that were over 11 feet long and weighed up to 750 pounds.

The salmon congregating at the mouth of the Fraser are food for our famous orca whales, resident among the Gulf Islands. It was here that 'Moby Doll' survived a harpooning in 1964. At that time, two other orcas swam under Moby Doll, lifting her up to

prevent her from drowning. And so began the love affair with orcas. They are now the most studied whales anywhere. Everyone of them has a number and a name. Recently J-34 (Double Stuf) was found dead and then J-2 (Granny) at age 105—bringing their number down to 78—and on the endangered list.

The Gulf Islands are also considered something special—comparable to 'Cottage Country' in Ontario. In 1974, the government of BC placed a number of them into the Islands Trust to 'preserve and protect'. The people here consider our whole area a precious inheritance, a special trust.

Because of these surroundings, the people in this area have become highly aware of the environment. It is the home of David Suzuki and many environmental groups. Recent polls show that 16% of BC people say they will vote Green in the coming provincial election—much higher than elsewhere in Canada.

A great alliance exists with the First Nations people who have lived in harmony with nature for 8,000 years. We now call this whole area the Salish Sea, in honour of the Coast Salish people, who treated this area with such respect. We just wish the rest of Canada would show the same respect for this wonderful place.

One spill would ruin our Salish Sea—the beaches, the whales, the seabirds, and the salmon—the things we love so much and the things we have done so much to protect. We are assured of a 'world class' cleanup, but there is no such thing as a 'world class' cleanup. The best attempts at cleaning up crude oil spills have a 10% to 15% rate of success. Because dilbit sinks, and cannot be skimmed off the surface, it would be more like a 5% rate of success. A 5% 'cleanup' is really a 95% 'mess-up'.

So you can understand how we felt when Trudeau approved the Kinder Morgan pipeline and the tanker route to the Pacific—announcing it was 'best for Canada'. From our point of view, it was the worst

possible thing. It strikes us as a distorted set of values—to put the tar sands along with their toxic tailing ponds and their climate-changing emissions ahead of the treasured heritage of southern British Columbia. To place the dying throws of the fossil fuel industry ahead of environmental values—the only values that will get civilization through the climate disaster looming ahead.

We need a dramatic change from the dictates of the fossil fuel industry. We need to take our democracy back, so that the well-being of people once again becomes the primary purpose of government.

Doug Carrick, Hornby Island

Time for Truth and Dare

Dear Editor:

The truth is that the 2017 federal budget did reduce some of the subsidies to the fossil fuel industry, but what about the hundreds of millions of dollars of our taxes still funding this industry?

Is it a smokescreen that the budget did include some important steps toward a clean energy economy, such as efforts to reduce reliance on diesel in indigenous and northern communities? Canada is fortunate to have many sources of renewable power (wind, solar, geothermal, etc) and Canada has the tools, technology, ideas, innovation and policies to accomplish the emission targets we've set to hold global temperature rise to a maximum of 2°C.

I dare our Canadian Government to take the leap of faith and build a clean economy that will create long-term jobs throughout the country, reduce extreme weather events, improve human health and reduce boom-and-bust cycles in the energy sector that are causing some regions of the country to suffer.

It's time to put an end to fossil fuel subsidies once and for all. Join me and contact your MP and dare them to fix this budget now—before it is too late.

Annette Witterman, Mayne Island

BC ELECTION

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2017

NANAIMO-NORTH COWICHAN

Lia Versaevel, BC Greens

Under four successive Liberal governments, BCHydro's debt has increased from \$6 billion in 2005 to over \$80.2 billion now. The components include \$5.9 billion in Regulatory Accounts, \$18 billion in Long Term Debt, and \$56.3 billion in Long Term Private Power (IPP) Contracts. These figures come from Hydro's most recent Annual Report and an analysis of historical, corporate and legislative practices.

British Columbians find their eyes glazing over, hearing these sums. Should any of us attempt such creative accounting, we would have Revenue Canada and the RCMP at our doors. The Liberals want us, and future generations, to pay this debt.

The BC Greens have a better plan: call a public inquiry into the finances and accounting practices of BCHydro. Halt the Site C dam. Place BCHydro under the jurisdiction of the BC Utilities Commission, strengthening its mandate, so that the Province cannot interfere in its operations.

NANAIMO-NORTH COWICHAN

Doug Routley, BC NDP

I am very concerned about the accumulated and growing debt of BCHydro. Since 2001, BCHydro's debt has tripled to almost \$20 billion and rates have gone up 87%. And they are forecasted to rise even more.

The debt can be broken into three general categories: expensive private power contracts (IPPs) mandated by the BCLiberals, bad capital projects and cost overruns, and good capital projects (such as the John Hart dam replacement in Campbell River).

John Horgan's plan, PowerBC, focuses on conservation through retrofit programs for public buildings, homes and businesses, and maximizing the power generated by upgrading existing hydroelectric dams (for example, building a new unit at the Revelstoke Dam). We will invest in clean energy like wind, solar and battery storage technology. We will also have the BC Utilities Commission examine existing megaprojects like the Site C dam.

VICTORIA—SWAN LAKE:

Chris Maxwell, BC Greens

BC Hydro has debt totaling \$80 billion (deferrals + long term debt + future purchase commitments), which will be inherited by our children and grandchildren. Why? BCHydro buys more power than we need and pays higher than market rates: buy high, sell low, repeat. Since 2003, estimates indicate BCHydro paid private power companies \$9 billion for \$4 billion worth of energy. Also, Liberal and NDP governments extracted \$20 billion from BCHydro (dividends since 1990). Indeed, BCHydro borrows money to help 'balance' BC's recent operating budgets.

Now, imagine 100 coins on a table each worth 100 million dollars. That is the cost of Site C (\$10 billion), which will produce overpriced power we don't need to support an LNG industry we don't have.

BCLiberals fought our teachers for 15 years over just three of those coins. Imagine what we could do with 97 more! Devastating environmental costs set aside, Site C is abysmal economics: [CLICK HERE](#) to find out more.

Island Tides asks:

‘What are the major components of the accumulated debt of BCHydro? Why has this debt been accumulated? How will the debt be paid off?’

SAANICH NORTH & THE ISLANDS

Gary Holman, BC NDP

BCHydro is \$20-billion in debt—it has tripled since 2001. Far too much of this debt has resulted from politically-driven private power production that BC does not need, and poor project management resulting in huge cost overruns. It's all right there on your monthly BCHydro bills—they have almost doubled since 2001—and the \$9 billion (and counting) Site C dam will only make this worse.

Why? Ask Christy Clark. Her BCLiberal government has operated BCHydro for years without independent oversight by the BC Utilities Commission. John Horgan and the BCNDP would restore the authority of BCUC, and meet our energy needs through conservation retrofits, upgrading existing dams, and small-scale, distributed renewables. Reversing Hydro's mismanagement will take time, and we can't start until we change this government. To do that we need to win here in Saanich North and the Islands.

SAANICH NORTH AND THE ISLANDS:

Adam Olsen, BC Greens

BC Hydro's debt has increased by over \$10 billion in the last decade, not counting the billions more expected from upgrades to infrastructure and the construction of the Site C Dam. The debt stems from the fact that BCHydro has to pay hundreds of millions to the BC Government in annual dividends, no matter if they can afford it or not, to help the BCLiberals 'balance' the budget.

Then there's the deferred accounting which has let BCHydro put billions of dollars of current spending into regulatory accounts to be paid later—basically to keep rates artificially low.

Last, the numerous Independent Power Producer contracts have forced BCHydro to buy power at rates far above market value.

Direct political interference by the BCLiberals has resulted in large-scale fiscal mismanagement and substantial debt.

How will that debt be repaid? Watch your hydro rates increase.

NORTH ISLAND

Sue Moen, BC Greens

The BCLiberals negotiated bad (for us) contracts with independent power producers (IPPs). The Green Party supports small IPPs as critical components of the clean tech future and as ongoing sources of local jobs, particularly for First Nations—as long as they meet their environmental compliance requirements. We'll fund compliance enforcement rather than leave it to them. The Greens will review and re-negotiate these contracts. BCHydro has also consistently underestimated capital costs including the boondoggle of Site C, which the Greens will stop. BCHydro pays a dividend to the government coffers rather than paying down its own debt or keeping rates lower. These decisions were made by the Liberal government, not BCHydro. The Greens will put BCHydro back under the oversight of the BC Utilities Commission to correct past mistakes and make sure our great-great-grandchildren aren't paying for them.

NORTH ISLAND

Claire Trevena, BC NDP

The massive debt held by BCHydro results from stunningly bad decisions by the BCLiberals. BCHydro accrued debt because of BCLiberal support for independent power projects (IPPs), the Site C dam, and taking money out of BCHydro to pay for unrelated programs. We may never know the true cost of the contracts with IPPs but we do know BCHydro is tied to 40-year deals that pay IPPs much more than the value of the electricity they generate. Site C construction will cost at least \$8.5 billion and it's questionable whether this can ever be paid off. Further, we know the BCLiberals have been siphoning money from BCHydro to spend elsewhere. It will be extraordinarily difficult to clear these debts. A John Horgan BC NDP government will re-examine the Site C project by sending it back to the BC Utilities Commission and use BCHydro funds only for BCHydro.

PARKSVILLE-QUALICUM

Sue Powell, BC NDP

As a retired person, I believe that affordability is a really important issue in this election. Like everybody I know, making ends meet is too often a challenge. My monthly hydro bill is in no small part the problem. It is unacceptable that BCHydro's debt has tripled since 2001 and is now almost \$20 billion. BCHydro rates for you and I have gone up by almost 90% in that period, and they are forecasted to rise even higher. Part of the problem is that we are paying too much to private producers through lucrative contracts between the Christy Clark government and their friends in the private power industry. John Horgan's team is committed to a plan to re-focus our energy policy on conservation, retrofit programs, clean energy and re-establishing proper oversight through the BC Utilities Commission.

PARKSVILLE—QUALICUM

Glenn Sollitt, BC Greens

BCHydro's debt has grown from \$5 billion to about \$74 billion in recent years. The debt is a mix of Regulatory Deferrals, Long Term Debt and Independent Power Power (IPP) contracts. One of the main reasons the debt has grown so substantially is that the government no longer uses Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) to present the current financials of BC Hydro, making the change to a US based system after 2008. The new system allows for a greater use of Deferral Accounts for both debt and anticipated profits. Using these new principles, the government is able to draw immediate dividends against future potential profits and move the visual impact of debt into the future as well—thus, 'balancing' the annual provincial government budget. Unfortunately, this comes at the cost of an enormous BCHydro debt that will need to be paid down by future generations. Renewed BCHydro oversight is imperative.

COWICHAN VALLEY:

Sonia Furstenaus, BC Greens

The BCLiberals have created contracts with Independent Power Producers to bring smaller scale, renewable energy into the BCHydro grid—a good idea gone bad because BCLiberals negotiated contracts giving a guaranteed income to the companies, even when energy isn't being

Continued on next page



Photo: Mike Yip

Herring eggs washed up on Madrona Beach in Nanoose Bay. As well as a basic food for sealife in the Salish Sea, ‘roe on a branch’ is part of First Nations feasts at elaborate winter dances, and for family rituals where respect is paid to ancestors.

BC ELECTION

2017 - What Your Candidates Say -

BC ELECTION

2017

Continued from previous page

produced, leaving the BC public on the hook to make up the shortfall.

Also, BCHydro has paid billions in dividends to the government, even when they have no surplus—creating even greater debt. Since 1992, of over \$6 billion paid in dividends, \$3.8 billion was borrowed!

Add more than \$9 billion for the unnecessary Site C to this equation and ratepayers will be crushed by BCHydro’s debt.

These contracts and practices need to be reviewed, environmental protection needs to be ensured, and BCHydro needs to be brought back under the oversight of the BC Utilities Commission.

The public good and clean energy should be the priorities.

COWICHAN VALLEY
Lori Iannidinardo, BC NDP
People in the Cowichan Valley are well aware that their electricity costs are too high. Because of Christy Clark’s choices, BCHydro’s debt has tripled since 2001, to almost \$20 billion. BCHydro rates have already gone up 87% since 2001 and are forecasted to rise more. We have witnessed in our communities that the impact of these reckless policies can be catastrophic for families.

John Horgan’s plan is smart. PowerBC focuses on conservation through retrofit programs for public buildings, homes and businesses,

Island Tides asks:
‘What are the major components of the accumulated debt of BCHydro? Why has this debt been accumulated? How will the debt be paid off?’

maximizing the power generated by upgrading existing hydroelectric dams (for example, building a new unit at Revelstoke Dam) and cancelling projects that don’t make sense for the people of BC. A BC NDP government will be guided by our Clean Growth Climate Action Plan that commits to investment in clean energy like wind, solar and battery storage technology.

SAANICH SOUTH:
Mark Neufeld, BC Greens
BCHydro should be back under the oversight of the BC Utilities Commission.

Money spent on Site C could have been invested into small project renewable energy that would have benefited communities where they live—and reduced our hydro bills. Gordon Planes and the T’Sou-ke Nation have shown how incredible 21st century energy solutions can be when guided by communities.

This government gave up on a \$1.2 billion wind investment offer north of Jordan River—a no-brainer for BCHydro, given the evidence of global investment in wind and the low cost to harness its energy.

Instead, BCLiberals sunk nearly \$2 billion into a dam we do not need in conflict with Treaty 8 nations and farmers protecting some rich

farmland. I would take Harry Swain’s advice: get out of Site C now so as not to increase our debt. Instead invest in geothermal electricity, for which we have knowledge and expertise.

OAK BAY—GORDON HEAD
Andrew Weaver, BC Greens
The BC Greens are concerned about BCHydro’s debt. A major component of this debt is the poor contracts that the BCLiberals have negotiated with IPPs. A BC Green government would review contracts with IPPs. We would also review public sector procurement and the mandate of BCHydro to optimize support for clean energy development.

IPP’s can accomplish social and environmental goods. They provide employment, particularly for First Nations. They include solar, wind and run-of-river projects, providing small-scale sustainable power, critical to us meeting our clean energy demand and building the clean tech industry. IPPs should be small-scale, benefit local communities, and have little environmental impact. The BCLiberals have not invested adequately in environmental compliance.

A BC Green government will properly fund regulation enforcement. Furthermore, a BC Green government will ensure that the BC Public Utilities Commission has oversight of BC Hydro. ☞

Island Tides emailed the above question to all contactable, declared candidates running in: Powell–River Sunshine Coast, North Island, Courtenay–Comox, Parksville–Qualicum, Mid Island–Pacific Rim, Nanaimo, Nanaimo–North Cowichan, Cowichan Valley, Langford–Juan de Fuca, Saanich North & The Islands, Oak Bay–Gordon Head, Esquimalt–Metchosin, Saanich South, Victoria–Beacon Hill, Victoria–Swan Lake. All received responses of the correct length are above, and may have been edited for relevance to the question. All candidates are invited to answer upcoming questions.

Jim Benninger, David Calder, Alana DeLong, Barb Desjardins, Kim Darwin, Alex Dutton, Rob Fleming, Scott Fraser, Sonia Furstenau, Paris Gaudet, Kalen Harris, Gary Holman, John Horgan, Steve Houser, Carole James, Leonard Krog, Alicia La Rue, Chris Maxwell, Andy MacKinnon, Mark Neufeld, Sue Moen, Cathy Noel, Adam Olsen, Lana Popham, Stephen Roberts, Doug Routley, Ernie Sellentin, Nic Simons, Dallas Smith, Glenn Sollitt, Michelle Stilwell, Claire Trevena, Lia Versaevel, Andrew Weaver, Matthew Wilson

Saturna All Candidates Meeting - Priscilla Ewbank

Saturna Community Club has sponsored all candidates meetings for years—47 years that I know of. Federal, provincial, Islands Trust: whenever islanders are voting in public elections.

To see, hear and interact with the candidates is such a help. A central feature of our island all candidate meetings is a proper potluck dinner for community and candidates. And later, there are sweets, coffee and tea for islanders who just want to join the meeting.

NDP incumbent Gary Holman, BC Greens' Adam Olsen, and BCLiberal Stephen Roberts, and their accompanying staff, joined about 25 islanders for the evening.

At Adam's suggestion, instead of having a headtable, candidates sat in a circle among islanders and as more joined, a second ring of chairs was added. Our excellent moderator, Dan Thachuck, asked them all the same question at the get-go: 'Since an MLA has the dual role of representing their constituents and making decisions for the good of the Province, please identify three or four issues you judge to be the most important in this riding and Province-wide.'

Locally, ferries was at the top of the list for all three. Gary Holman also identified adequate support for services—health, education, recycling, and marine protection.

Adam Olsen identified First Nations' relationship to federal and provincial government, and the Island Trust; returning people's trust in governance; addressing affordability in view of the widening gap between all islanders and their ability to afford education, a good job, and homes; and finally he listed Kinder Morgan and its tanker traffic.

Beyond ferries, Stephen Roberts felt that the local issues were up to the communities to identify.

Saturna Islanders are well up on ferry statistics and related fees for subsidized travel in the Lower Mainland. Ex-Saturna Islander and *Vancouver Sun* columnist, Stephen Hume and *Victoria Times Colonist* columnist, Jack Knox both wrote articles solid with facts and history just before our meeting on who pays how much ferry costs.

As well, the Southern Gulf Island Ferry Advisory Committee in concert with the other ferry advisory committees up and down the coast have written a definitive report using graphs and text to clearly layout the history and changes for fare increases (See *Island Tides* last edition [CLICK HERE](#)). All agree that ferry fares are an election issue. Noting that currently we pay 101% of ferry operating costs and the percentage increases in a short timespan is mind-boggling.

We are fortunate to have Brain Hollingshead, Chair of the Southern Gulf Islands Ferry Advisory Committee as a part-time resident on Saturna and he attended the meeting. His committee is non-partisan, supplying facts and figures to all interested parties. Brian was a fount of facts and history of this situation that began before the BCLiberals current reign of 16 years. Additionally, helping us further understand the situation, Gary Holman is Deputy Critic for the NDP on Ferries.

While Stephen Roberts said that having a BCLiberal represent our riding would allow a locally elected person to make changes in ferry fares, the crowd was skeptical that a first-time publically elected person would hold much possibility that he could convince the BCLiberals to get our fares in some normal place.



Through a question from the floor, discussion led more to the possibility that the BCLiberals had formed government without our votes and were, perhaps, punishing the coast for not supporting their party. The party also saves lots of money by making us pay.

The question of privilege and access bought by individuals and corporations through large donations to the BCLiberal party—and the proposed BCLiberal committee's ability to make useful recommendations about declaring such sums—came up promptly.

Holman, Opposition Spokesperson for Democratic Reform, and BC Greens candidate Olsen were quick to point out that parties *already have to declare donations*. The actual problem is the *lack of limitation on corporate and personal donations from corporations* that want to have legislation and regulations that serve their interests.

It was pointed out that BC Elections has passed on to the RCMP a review of allegations involving indirect political donations. Also that two lawyers are taking the present government to court challenging the use of taxpayer money to pay for election ads that the BCLiberals passed off as provincial information ads.

Answering a question about Site C dam, Gary Holman said we taxpayers have already spent \$4 billion dollars on Site C dam and the prediction is that the cost will climb way beyond stated costs, as other BCHydro projects can attest. The true cost of the Site C dam and its removal from the purview of the BC Utilities commission—what we pay for power, and what our children will pay—came in to the discussion. Holman stated that the NDP would send the project back to the BC Utilities Commission for review, as the NDP uses facts and science to make decisions of this nature.

A very interesting question one of our Island Trust trustees asked was, 'How best do we transition from fossil fuels to sustainable sources?' Conservation of already existing infrastructure, large and small, was the main conclusion, apparently backed by wide studies. Sitting in our Community Hall which has extensive renovations to achieve this end, I could agree.

In my personal evaluation, I thought that Adam Olsen made two very good points. The relationships between First Nations federally, provincially, and with the Island Trust are changing at a pace that we would not have imagined ten years ago. First Nations are now meaningfully and legally involved in the national marine conservation issue, the new sewage plant in Victoria, 'disposal' of DND lands surrounding Royal Roads College, Gulf Islands National Park Reserve, airport land-use with the Victoria Airport Authority (on lands that were annexed in World War II), Kinder Morgan oil

tanker traffic in our local waters, and much more.

His next point was that he, personally and as a BC Green, together with practically every level of local government, is opposing Steelhead LNG development in the Saanich Inlet. He warned not to be complacent—the corporation is pressing the BCLiberal government for environmental reviews and is hard at work lobbying. Many communities who have opposed corporations have ended up fighting both the corporation and the government to win their issue—as in Shawnigan Lake, he pointed out. It was good to hear a candidate take an unequivocal stand. Olsen was clear on his and his party's stands on a number of other issues at the meeting.

I found NDP incumbent Gary Holman to be an excellent listener, well-informed, able and willing to state and articulate his personal positions and the platform of his party. He is familiar with the issues locally and provincially especially since he is lead critic on the environment, on democratic reform and deputy critic on ferries.

Personally, I am tired of parties and candidates who are unwilling to state where they stand and provide substantiating facts for why they are committed to a position.

Stephen Roberts, running for the BCLiberals, I think found it hard to defend a government who has been in power for 16 years and has a long string of scandals associated with it: from BC Rail to the 'wild west show'—*The New York Times* description of the 'donations' situation in BC. In my opinion, he is well-spoken, a curious, thoughtful person, and dedicated to winning for the BCLiberals. He is obviously comfortable being a conservative and maybe not so comfortable being a BCLiberal. He was clear, he does not support ferry fares and he would strongly lobby for change if elected.

A nimble moderator, the Chair of the Southern Gulf Islands Ferry Advisory Committee, the three candidates, and informed islanders made for to-the-bone and from-the-heart discussion.

While the candidates were respectful, between the three of them the discussion was lively, clarification and correction was prompt, and the spin factor was quickly stopped dead!

Having witnessed recent elections in the US and here in Canada, I was grateful that all three candidates are 'normal' respectful candidate material who have even collaborated in our riding on issues of common concern. We aren't fighting with some fruitcake candidate to get time for discussing the real issues facing us. What a welcome change from the current political atmosphere we are living in.

Oh, yes, one of the candidates identified as a top provincial priority—change the government! 🗳️

Read our back issues in the archive section at www.islandtides.com.



Photo: Mike Yip

Sea lion catching a herring snack from a gillnetter's haul.

Saturna Notes - Priscilla Ewbank

This article is getting written on the first day of spring! Absolutely no more snow! Not by much though—the last tiniest icebergs of snowplow-tossed, gravel-encrusted, north-roadside-inhabiting snow melted away last week.

Spring is slowly underway. At this slow rate, we are going to have every kind of daffodil and narcissi blooming at once. Yippee! I am yearning for colour and bright foliage! I'm not even very behind in pruning. The roses just got lopped-off yesterday with only tiny leaf bundles hitting the sodden earth. The sage and lavender are just going to have to grin and bear their slightly tardy shearing. Everything was so savvy and stayed dormant longer.

The little crocus are out in the rock paths. In my garden, crocus and orange-dusted bumblebees go together. Colliding with a noisy, loaded with pollen bumblebee—kind of like a Beaver seaplane—is part of spring. Last week I saw the first turkey vulture. I hear frogs, and eagles are noisy and all about.

I am eating stinging nettle greens and soup—delicious! And my supply of last year's onions has just run out—it was becoming a race between them sprouting and growing or hitting the frying pan sliced!

Very low tides are back during the day. Way out on the rocky, rarely exposed ledges at Winter Cove it seems like you could almost jump to Samuel Island.

St Patrick's Day Tea Dance

Our Community Hall is undergoing a major renovation within the lovely confines of its original décor and lines. We have gotten some grants, fundraised and asked for donations. Most of the work has been invisible and expensive—drywall, basement cement flooring, shoring-up parts of the building, insulation, plumbing, bathrooms, new ventilation and heating—solid improvements that will show up in the longevity and our electricity bill.

The hall is full of surprises as the jobs steadily roll off the 'to do' list. And yet the hall is the same—our



community living room—dedicated in our Saturna Community Club Charter to the wellbeing of us islanders.

It has been very interesting to see the actual joists, stringers, siding, flooring, and the sandstone pillars that the building has rested on since 1933. Deep, gold-brown, knotless milled-on-island cedar, dry as a bone, has held up dancing feet, kids getting their prizes on graduation day, Santa Ship escapades, Lamb BBQ preparation, wedding and celebration of life receptions, all candidate meetings, play school, yoga, concerts and presentations.

This St Patrick's Day Tea Dance was full circle, as Saturna held its first dance in 1932 on St Patrick's Day to raise funds to build our own Saturna Island hall. Islanders were tired of always rowing over to Mayne, Pender and Galiano to their halls to socialize!

The tea and dance were wonderful. The food table was loaded with savories and sweets, 'Water In the Crawl Space' played and sang with a sweet fiddle, bass, keyboards, harmonica and a caller! The caller got out on the dance floor, taught us the steps and danced along as the the lead couple. The kids had a blast!

The tea dance raised \$2,000 for the renovation and we would welcome any further gifts of monies to accomplish this grand undertaking. Dian Johnstone and Jacques Campbell are in charge of money foraging. ☞



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MEETING

School District #64 (Gulf Islands). Regular meetings of the Board of School Trustees will be held on Wednesday, April 12, at the Pender Islands School. Meeting commencing at 1pm. Public Welcome!

Agenda:
http://sd64.bc.ca/district/school-board-meetings/



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Photo: John Cameron
Students at Salt Spring Elementary take part in a Species at Risk fair.

The Right Party

To me, May can't come soon enough,
Especially when I hear the guff
Those Liberals peddle for our ears—
As program for the coming years.
So many things need restoration,
Due to their bad administration.
Change in direction's what is needed,
With Christy's minions superceded!

So candidates in this parliament
Must be of forward-thinking bent—
In which precept the Greens excel,
With dynamic new ideas as well.
Their platform is straightforward, heeds
Our future economic needs—
And takes care of the present, too
(That means the likes of me and you!)

Child poverty will be addressed,
Emission worries put to rest.
Their policies, of the right intent,
Are set to guide each department.
In May we'll hear the elector's voice,
Let's choose Green as the People's Choice
So in this year's election scene -
Be sure to mark your ballot Green!

—H Barry Cotton, March 2017

SD 64 School News



Photo: John Cameron
Students take part in a Species at Risk fair.

Species at Risk fair - Shelly Johnson
Thanks to a Habitat Stewardship Program grant and the Salt Spring Island Conservancy, five classes of students at Salt Spring Elementary School have been studying 'Species at Risk'. This work culminated in a Species at Risk Fair on March 13. Student engagement was evident as they presented on species that ranged from the Threaded Vertigo and the Blue-grey Taildropper to the iconic Southern Resident Killer Whale. Most of the 42 species at risk that live on or around Salt Spring Island were represented through the students' research projects.

Canada 150 Student-Made Video
In celebration of Canada's 150th birthday, Fernwood School grade 5 student Corbin Roome created a video about Salt Spring Island which will be featured on the Canada 150 website. The video, which Corbin made with the help of his teacher Andrew McPhee, is part of a C3—Coast to Coast to Coast—celebration. Videos from all over the country will showcase ports of call planned for a 150 day sailing journey to commemorate Canada's anniversary.

The video includes Salt Spring history, a list of 'must-see' locations on the island, Corbin's

narration, and videos of locations on Salt Spring. [CLICK HERE](#) to view Corbin's video.

GISS Improv Team Heads to Nationals
The six-person Gulf Islands Secondary School Improv team has won the Vancouver Island Region and earned a spot among the top twenty teams in Canada. They will be headed to Ottawa for the Canadian Improv Games national finals on April 19-22. The students, in grades 9-12 and from Mayne, Pender and Salt Spring, will be performing on stage at the National Arts Centre on Parliament Hill.



The team members are grade 12s: Melanie Gregory-Worsell, Peter Hoskins and Shaye Steele, grade 11s: Fiona Pirie and Kane O'Scaleigh, and grade 9 Amelia McCluskey, and their coach, teacher Jason Donaldson. This is the fifth time the Gulf Islands team has made it to nationals since they began participating in the games in 2004.

To raise money for their trip to Ottawa, the young improvisers have shows scheduled for Mayne Island, on April 7; Pender Island on April 8; and Salt Spring Island on April 10. A raffle is currently underway and a silent auction is in the works. Donations are also being accepted. [CLICK HERE](#) to support the team.

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Photo: Pene Hollingworth

A fully loaded Indian ferry. Note the solar panel (bottom of photo) powering the ferry loading barge from which the photo was taken.

Could BC Ferries take lessons? - Pene Hollingworth

As I waited at the ferry terminal at Jorhat, India, and watched the surrounding colour and chaos, BC Ferries came to mind. It seems we are always discussing and complaining about the decisions made by the ferry corporation. I was about to experience another crossing, on the Brahmaputra River, from Jorhat to Majuli Island in the State of Assam, India. The crossing, much like our crossing from Tsawassen to Swartz Bay, would take approximately an hour-and-a-half.

Similarities between the crossing to Majuli Island and the crossing to Vancouver Island from Tsawassen seem to end at this point.

What struck me most after the initial rush to get to the landing on the mighty Brahmaputra River was the lack of road rage as people and vehicles waited to get on board the next ferry. Our driver called out to his friends and 'arranged' with others to get his van in an ideal position to board the next ferry to Majuli Island.

The Brahmaputra ferry is much smaller than our ferries here at home, but handles the loads in a very efficient way. You will find loads like you will never see at Tsawassen. Chickens, goats, pigs, cows, people, motorcycles, cars, bicycles, donkey carts, bullock carts, vans and trucks all have their place on these ferries and all pay a fare. The Assamese have simplified everything and seem to have made the crossing cost-effective. For the cost of 15 rupees (31¢) a passenger secures an hour and a half voyage—or however long it takes. Volume makes the difference.

Passengers are loaded first and after they are on board everything else is loaded. The passengers are trapped in the downstairs passenger section, blocked in by vans nestled right up against the doorway.

Loading is from a barge as the banks of the river are constantly eroding. The barge has to keep moving to accommodate the heavy planks that are used for everyone and the vehicles to load. The planks are moved according to the wheelbase of whatever vehicle is going on board.

Cars, trucks and vans are parked with precision to get as many on, regardless of load limits. The space between our van and the next van was two inches. Our driver got out by shimmying out the window and walking across the roofs of cars and vans until he reached the roof of the ferry. He joined the many passengers and all the motorcycles up on the roof.

Fresh air was readily available on their 'sun deck'. The roof was reached by planks put up for the motorcycles or a ladder if you were not around for that event. Lifejackets were not available for the roof residents, neither was the concession stand. The concession stand, inside the passenger cabin, consisted of one man who stood against a wall and sold Masala chai and bags of potato chips.

The inside cabin with a published capacity of 50 passengers held close to 400 people, with a few lifejackets festooning the inside of the corrugated roof. I don't think there were even 50.

Entertainment was watching the brightly coloured Assamese in their traditional dress coping with their children and producing various Indian delicacies to share with friends and family nearby.

A toilet is available for the women, but you couldn't pay me enough to go in there. Men have the Brahmaputra River at their feet—but be careful of the loose boards and railings at the edge of the deck. The windows, without glass, had horizontal bars to prevent people getting in or out, necessary for freeloaders at the terminals or those wanting to take a swim. These bars also served as a foothold for those dangling from the ferry if there was not room inside or on the roof. I am not sure what they charged someone who had to hang on the outside for an hour-and-a-half.

In short, a cutback on security, fancy docking and loading ramp facilities, staff cutbacks (only three onboard: captain, concession stand operator, and ticket taker), fewer safety features, maximization of loads, and flexibility of departure times would probably make BC Ferries cost effective and affordable.

And, oh, they also have sailing waits—we didn't get on the first ferry. ☹


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What's On? VANCOUVER ISLAND & ALL THE GULF ISLANDS



Easter Sunday, April 16

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What's in the 2017 budget?

Elizabeth May, MP

On March 22, Finance Minister Bill Morneau came out with his government's second budget. The big numbers spin around some ambitious announcements; billions in several different funds for clean tech entrepreneurs, venture capital, and super clusters.

On Housing: a National Housing Strategy including a \$5 billion National Housing Fund, plus \$3.2 billion over the next 11 years for provinces and territories on affordable housing, \$300 million for northern housing, \$225 million on housing for indigenous people not on reserves and another \$2.1 billion for the Homelessness Partnering Strategy. Plus \$202 million to use surplus federal lands and make them available for housing.

On Child Care: \$7 billion over ten years to support and create affordable child care spaces.

On Health: \$5 billion in home care and mental health, as well as \$644 million in drugs and prescription medications strategy.

For Parks Canada: \$364 million over the next two years.

On Climate Action: over \$1 billion in commitments to greener infrastructure, light rail, energy efficient transportation, and electric vehicle infrastructure.

For Public Transit: over \$20 billion over 11 years for federal-provincial-territorial cooperation.

For VIA Rail: \$867 million over three years vaguely described as 'for operations and capital requirements'. However, after asking VIA, this turns out to be the current regular amount. VIA is pleased it has a three-year stable funding, but there's no new money.

My hopes that we could get the long-sought support to restore rail service on Vancouver Island do not look any closer. (With a schedule to suit commuters, we should get hundreds of thousands of cars off the road.)

Spending Delayed

For the most part, the billions that were announced in budget 2016 are now getting more details in budget 2017. But there is much to dig into. Some of the funds will be spent soon, with money starting to flow this year. But for most of the spending, funds do not begin to flow until budget year 2018-19, with most of the funds slated for spending after the 2019 election.

For example, of the over \$20 billion for public transit, less than \$1 billion will be spent before 2019. For electric vehicle infrastructure, no more than \$30 million will be spent before the next election. On child care spaces, no money flows until 2018-19 (\$540 million). For mental health and home care, just over 20% of promised funding will be spent before the next election.

Digging Into the Budget

I would have preferred the announced dollars were clearly presented. The spending is better than nothing, but reading the budget is an exercise in chasing down the truth. I don't like the feeling someone is trying to trick me.

Funds committed to be rolled out immediately include the Parks Canada commitments. Most of the Parks Canada money is for capital acquisition and not expanding the Parks operating budget, raising my hopes we may be able to purchase Owl Island off Salt Spring Island to expand Gulf Islands National Park. Certainly, Parks Canada was a big winner in this budget.

As well, an \$80 million commitment was announced to rebuild and upgrade Sidney's Plant Health Centre right here in Saanich-Gulf Islands, the one I succeeded in keeping open after the Harper government announced its closure. The funds will run for five years, with spending starting this year. This exciting announcement will significantly boost the scientific research capacity of our local quarantine centre for plant viruses.

Other items in the budget of local interest include 'a comprehensive plan to address derelict and abandoned vessels'. This is part of the Ocean Protection Plan. The previously announced \$1.5 billion in spending is re-announced, but without details as to how much funding will go to the various components of the plan, including derelict vessels.

Not In The Budget

What was not in the budget? I had been sure that climate measures that had been in pre-Harper budgets would be restored, such as Eco-Energy Retrofits



Photo (and painting): Keith Holmes

Queen of Nanaimo by Moonlight. Christa Grace-Warrick of *Island Tides* has lent this painting of the ship in Active Pass for display aboard *Queen of Nanaimo* before she finally goes out of service this year. Pictured above on *Queen of Cumberland*, look for it on board *Queen of Nanaimo* after mid-April.

One of the *Queen of Nanaimo's* replacement vessels, the *Salish Eagle*, has arrived on the west coast after completing a 10,440-nautical-mile journey from Poland. *Queen of Nanaimo* is now expected to be in service this summer alongside *Salish Eagle* (the third replacement vessel, *Salish Raven* has not yet started the trip from the Gdansk shipyard).

First Nation artwork will be applied to *Salish Eagle* and crew training will take place before it comes into operation this summer.

and rebates for buying more fuel efficient or electric vehicles.

I am extremely disappointed that Morneau did not announce the change in the pension rules in the *Superannuation Act* for veterans and others who marry after 60 (the so-called 'gold-digger clause'). I have been trying to get every finance minister since Jim Flaherty to eliminate this archaic rule. I finally received a written commitment from Finance Minister Morneau that this was now government policy, but it did not happen.

Fossil Fuel Subsidies

Fossil fuels subsidies continue, but at a lower level. The elimination of the tax credit for oil and gas discovery wells is a good start, cutting \$150 million/year in public funds to fossil fuels. But billions continue to go to oil sands and fracked natural gas.

Overall, the Trudeau administration continues to say the right things about climate, but without any degree of urgency. Approving projects that increase greenhouse gas emissions while trying to reduce emissions with programmes that do not kick in for several years is a prescription for failure. We need a tougher target and more disciplined, government-wide efforts to meet it.

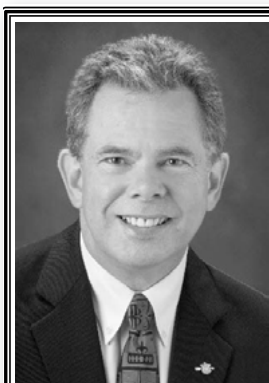
Balancing The Budget?

And the big fiscal question: when will the budget be balanced? At some point the government will need to re-examine its revenue requirements. Those are our requirements to ensure our society is resilient, equitable and functions well. This may mean going back to look at the GST and raise taxes on our largest corporations, such as the banks.

But no one in politics, except me, seems willing to say the obvious. We cannot constantly cheer for tax cuts if we want to ensure fairness, health, and the common good. ☞

Moon Dates:

Full: April 10 • New: April 26 • Full: May 10 • New: May 25



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Gulf Islands Regional Trails Plan - Priscilla Ewbank

About four years ago, the Experience the Gulf Islands Initiative set up a booth at an August Saturna Saturday Market. Three or so very talented and very enthused Galiano Islanders had excellent maps and were inviting islanders and visitors to tell them what they thought would be a good trail system on Saturna to link into other Gulf Islands' trails, networking entire islands—with the addition of some types of marine connectors. The booth was hopping with maps marked, stickies applied, animated conversations. A southern Gulf Islands-wide survey appeared in *Island Tides* asking what we might like for inter-island travel options.

I forgot about the whole thing.

A couple of years ago, originating on Galiano, came Tour des Îles, a three day event making southern islanders more familiar with each other's attractions. Every June since, in a 3-day odyssey, small boats take islanders and visitors island-hopping with linking on-land tours to visit attractions and venues especially prepared for the occasion.

This year, it's Friday, June 23 to Sunday, June 25. While there is a serendipity factor, each year it gets tighter and better organized and more and more people participate and even enjoy the ad hockery that an undertaking of this magnitude of coordination invites. Enthusiastic start-up, maximum from the bottom-up participation, beginning small and getting better and better, seems to be the development model for Tour des Îles.

So, when cheerful, welcoming parks people from the CRD showed up on Saturna Island to present an Open House with storyboards, cookies, coffee, and a proposed Gulf Islands Regional Trails map, I was interested.

Mention trails to Gulf Islanders and most jump at the chance. Between dog walking, exercising children, keeping fit, seeing new island places, birdwatching, natural history, contemplating, and just plain being outside and seeing this gorgeous part of the world, islanders are gung ho!

Apparently, the Experience the Gulf Islands Initiative made its way through the CRD with some big changes. The CRD is developing a strategy and plan for each island with lots of input from open houses and the invitation to contact them any time.

Saturna—and each of the Southern Islands—and Salt Spring contribute to the CRD tax base. CRD Parks figure that they will have about \$200,000 per year to spend on this effort. Trail-building is expensive and the CRD hopes to make successful applications for grants, and to partner with other agencies and interested island groups to raise more money.

Many of the current suggestions for trails follow roads and lead to some beauty point and then back to the ferry. The CRD wants to have a well scoped-out plan, attractive to the islanders, with a small start-up to present when applying for other monies.

Like the Experience the Gulf Islands Initiative, the National Marine Conservation Area, and Tour des Îles, this CRD Regional Trails Initiative is just beginning to take shape. With inspired input, realistic goals, scope and scale, and collaborative thinking, we may end up with some very worthy trails which we will all use with pleasure.

For example, here on Saturna there is a gorgeous, tiny two-lot CRD park east-facing, adjacent to East Point look-out at Boundary Pass where Moby Doll was originally harpooned out of J-Pod. This park is a huge asset to the community and would greatly augment Parks Canada's subsequent East Point Park by linking up the CRD proposed trail with the perimeter East Point Trail.



CRD maps show potential trail routes throughout the Gulf Islands. (Islands not shown all on the same scale.)

