



**Improving Capital Regional District  
Service Delivery  
on Salt Spring Island, BC:  
options for positive change**

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September 2018

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## **About Positively Forward and this report**

**Positively Forward** is a Salt Spring Island community group. It undertakes research and advocacy to advance improvements in local governance which also support the separation of the land use planning authority from the delivery of services.

The impetus for producing this report, *Improving Capital Regional District Service Delivery on Salt Spring Island, BC: options for positive change*, lies in the referendum on incorporation held in 2017.

The incorporation referendum stimulated intense community debate around differing models of local governance. It became clear that while the majority of voters supported the current governance system and, in particular, the Islands Trust and its mandate, many of those same voters were at times frustrated by the performance of the Capital Regional District (CRD) in delivering some services.

**Positively Forward** wanted to find out more about these concerns and look at how they might be addressed. The resulting report provides an overview of CRD service delivery from the perspective of islanders who interact closely with the CRD and know something of its strengths and weaknesses. The report acknowledges the many successes achieved within the CRD administration on Salt Spring. These success stories provide insights into why some Initiatives work. The purpose of identifying concerns and problem areas is to demonstrate a way forward, leading to improved service delivery.

**Positively Forward** hopes the report will become a catalyst for some changes within the CRD system. Equally important, we hope it will help inform the ongoing dialogue within our community about enhanced local governance.

## **Acknowledgements**

**Positively Forward** is indebted to lead researcher Maxine Leichter for the months of research, writing and fact-checking she has donated to producing this report. Maxine Leichter has lived on Salt Spring Island (SSI) full time since 2003 when she emigrated from California. She is the President of the SSI Water Preservation Society, is a former Environmental Supervisor for the City of Los Angeles, served as an elected Director of The Three Valleys Municipal Water district in Los Angeles County and is an avid follower of SSI local government. We thank Elizabeth White for her help in editing the report. Elizabeth has co-authored and edited several publications for federal and provincial governments. She coordinated and edited the Salt Spring Island Climate Action Plan, authored associated reports, and has co-authored and edited a number of submissions for the Salt Spring Island Agricultural Alliance.

This report would not have been possible without the contributions of the thirty-two islanders —present and former CRD Directors, Commissioners, CRD management, staff and volunteers—who agreed to be interviewed and who together represent over 275 years of involvement with the CRD. Thanks are also due to the CRD Directors of the two other electoral areas who shared their approaches to their roles.

The authors have used direct quotes with attribution when permitted, and have been careful to respect all requests for anonymity. We have done our best to ensure that the information presented in this report represents the opinions of those interviewed. We apologize for any errors in fact or interpretation.

**Positively Forward** also acknowledges the work of the Salt Spring Community Alliance Governance Working Group (GWG) and their report. Several members of our committee participated in the GWG, and research conducted by the GWG informed this report. The two reports focus on different aspects of local governance and complement each other.

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## **Summary and conclusions**

The purpose of this report was to review Capital Regional District (CRD) service delivery on Salt Spring Island (SSI), to recognize achievements, document any reported problems, to identify possible causes and suggest solutions. The work was undertaken by the Positively Forward group in response to concerns raised in 2017 by islanders on both sides of the incorporation referendum question. This report complements a parallel report prepared by the Salt Spring Community Alliance Governance Working Group.

The preparation of this report, which took place over ten months, included the following steps:

- literature review, including a brief review of legislation;
- interviews with 32 individuals with substantial CRD experience;
- follow-up questionnaire with 28 of those individuals;
- analysis of responses;
- development of strategies to address identified issues;
- report writing, fact-checking, editing and review.

### **Overview of CRD services on Salt Spring**

For the most part CRD provides and maintains infrastructure and delivers services on SSI reliably and efficiently. Much that has been accomplished by the CRD over the years can be attributed to a strong community involvement in decision-making, and partnerships between CRD management and various island groups. Examples include the Rainbow Road Pool, the Library, the Recycling Depot, the several kilometres of pathways constructed by the Partners Creating Pathways group, and Salt Spring's award-winning bus system.

The CRD delivers services on Salt Spring Island in four ways:

1. Directly by CRD staff—for example the emergency POD program, building inspection, and CRD bylaw enforcement.
2. By CRD staff guided by recommendations of a local Commission, such as Parks and Recreation Commission (PARC) operations.
3. Through non-profit organizations paid for by SSI property taxes and other funds received through the CRD. These services include the library and the recycling depot.
4. Through contractors—for example Salt Spring Transit is operated by a private contractor, and North Salt Spring Waterworks District is contracted to help maintain several CRD water treatment plants and water delivery systems on SSI.

The majority of CRD services on SSI are provided through twelve SSI CRD commissions, seven of which are local water or sewer service commissions serving a small number of properties. Each commission was established through an Establishment Bylaw that defines its structure and authority. On SSI, the commissions are largely advisory and report to the SSI CRD Director.

The CRD is governed by a 24-member Board of Directors which approves SSI bylaws and the CRD budget for SSI. It is rare for the board to decline a request from the SSI CRD Director. They have little reason to do so since SSI pays for its own services and those services do not impact the budgets of other parts of the region.

The SSI CRD Director sets priorities for the activities of the SSI commissions and determines their annual requisitions, with advice from staff. The CRD Director has significant discretionary funds at his/her disposal. These include the gas tax funds allocated to Salt Spring from the Federal

Community Works Program that are now over \$600,000 a year. The Director can ask the CRD Board to approve a pool of discretionary funds for a Grant-in-Aid program to support local initiatives. The Director can also create a fund to pay for administrative support.

Regional district ratepayers pay only for services received. In the case of Salt Spring, with a few small exceptions, CRD ratepayers outside SSI do not help fund services specific to Salt Spring and Salt Spring does not fund services specific to other parts of the CRD. Salt Spring Island ratepayers do contribute to various CRD-wide services such as regional parks, hospital services, and emergency communications. In addition to island-wide CRD property taxes—which were \$939.81 for an average residential property in 2017—ratepayers receiving local water or sewer services in a local service commission area must also pay charges related to the costs of repairing, maintaining and replacing that infrastructure, which in some cases are considerable.

### **Interview and questionnaire participants and process**

The 32 study participants had various roles with the CRD as follows:

- 3 current or former SSI CRD directors
- 4 current or former CRD staff
- 12 current or former CRD commissioners (island-wide commissions)
- 14 current or former CRD local water or sewer service commissioners
- 1 current or former consultants to CRD
- 10 other (includes various types of volunteer participation)

Many of the participants had served in several capacities. The average length of involvement with CRD was 9.8 years and the combined experience was over 275 years. For the interviews, each participant was asked to describe strengths and weaknesses of how CRD delivers services on SSI. The results were compiled and themes identified.

To find out how much the participants agreed on the issues, 54 statements taken from the interviews were organized into a questionnaire under three headings: CRD organization and management, CRD capital projects, and CRD commissions. A sub-set of statements was prepared for the local water and sewer service commissioners. The questionnaire was presented to 28 of the 32 study participants (those available and willing). The responses were tabulated and the 29 statements that were agreed by at least two thirds of respondents were considered representative.

Although the information provided was largely anecdotal, given the number of people interviewed, the in-depth nature of their experience with CRD, and the number of times that the same concerns were expressed, the findings likely represent a realistic summary of the issues and their causes.

### **Salt Spring CRD organization and management concerns**

93% of respondents agreed that there should be a Salt Spring CRD Work Plan and Priorities List updated on a regular basis and available online, similar to the SSI Local Trust Committee (LTC). Of the 54 questionnaire statements, this had the greatest level of agreement. The SSI LTC includes an updated Work Plan, status of applications, and Priorities List in each public meeting agenda package; this is a model that the CRD could adopt.

### **Issues with CRD capital projects on Salt Spring**

There is an accumulating backlog of SSI projects that have been approved and funded, but have not progressed in a timely manner. Examples include the North Ganges Transportation Plan and the Burgoyne Bay liquid waste facility. 82% of respondents agreed that projects could be completed more efficiently if qualified community organizations and volunteers were enlisted to help with certain aspects; and 81% of respondents agreed that it now takes an unacceptable amount of time for CRD to complete SSI projects that are funded and approved. One of the key causes for CRD's reluctance to use community resources was seen to be liability concerns, which 85% of respondents agreed should be addressed by finding solutions rather than by limiting assistance by commissioners, volunteers and organizations.

### **Difficulties with Salt Spring CRD commissions**

Not all commissions reported issues, and problems varied by commission. Commissioners reported that obtaining information was often difficult. Commissioners have been told that all communications must go through the already very busy SSI CRD Manager. 86% of respondents agreed that commissioners should be permitted to hold informal working group meetings without the presence of staff. 81% agreed that their skills, and those of other commissioners, were not being utilized appropriately.

### **Issues facing CRD local water and sewer service commissions**

Most of the 14 local water and sewer commissioners interviewed described serious financial and communication challenges that were reportedly causing hardship for local ratepayers, particularly those in small water districts. Commissioners expressed frustration at their inability to address the situation, and at difficulties in obtaining information. 71% of respondents agreed that operating and capital costs place an excessive burden on the relatively small number of properties serviced. 64% agreed that CRD made mistakes in design decisions leading to higher costs to water service or sewer service ratepayers.

## **Recommendations**

### *Three strategies to improve information flow, accountability and representation*

1. Provide a public, up-to-date Salt Spring CRD Work Plan with priorities and status reports.
2. Hold regular SSI inter-agency information meetings.
3. Establish an elected Salt Spring CRD Local Community Commission.

### *Five strategies to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of all Salt Spring CRD commissions*

4. Hold periodic public Salt Spring CRD All-Commission meetings.
5. Allow and encourage commissioners to meet in informal working groups.
6. Appoint a Salt Spring CRD Commission Coordinator.
7. Provide an annual orientation session for all commissioners.
8. Allow and encourage commissioners to take on tasks for which they are qualified.

*Two strategies to assist the Salt Spring CRD Local Service (water and sewer) Commissions*

The following two recommendations are specific to the seven CRD local water and sewer service commissions. Recommendations 4—8 above also apply to the local service commissions.

9. Provide local water and sewer service commissions with ratepayer contact information.
10. Initiate a consultation process with the local water and sewer service commissions on organizational improvements to better serve their ratepayers.

*Two strategies to foster stronger relationships with Salt Spring residents*

While the majority of our recommendations should help revitalize community relations, the following two recommendations focus specifically on the CRD's interactions with islanders.

11. Prioritize good community relations within CRD corporate culture.
12. Adopt a problem-solving approach.

*Strategy to reduce costs and project delays*

Our final recommendation highlights the importance of CRD partnerships with community organizations in providing timely and cost-effective service delivery.

13. Continue and expand service delivery by Salt Spring's not-for-profit groups, by local contractors, and by other local service providers.

## **Conclusions**

The concerns we identified in the course of preparing this report run deeper than the usual complaints about "City Hall". They are more than the inevitable conflicts between rate-payers' requests and expectations and the community's willingness and ability to pay for new projects and programs.

Areas in need of improvement include accountability and representation; access to information; community relations, including use of community resources; project delivery; commission efficiency and effectiveness; and coordination and collaboration.

Accountability and representation rest at the political level with the CRD Director. The CRD Director's position is potentially quite powerful in terms of setting priorities and spending. There is also considerable flexibility in terms of the CRD Director's approach to the role, as we found out when we interviewed the other CRD electoral area directors. An elected Local Community Commission with decision-making authority would increase representation and accountability through regular and frequent public meetings.

The majority of the local water and sewer service commissions are so severely disadvantaged that they cannot function effectively. Some of their problems could be alleviated if they were provided with adequate and timely information about capital projects, repairs and maintenance, and costs, along with ratepayer contact information and a basic level of administrative support. The commissioners also need the ability to step in to undertake tasks for which they are qualified, rather than have ratepayers cover the cost of CRD contractors for every small job.

The CRD commissions are primarily advisory commissions and they advise the CRD Director, not CRD management. It is the role of the CRD Director to work with senior management, taking

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commission recommendations under advisement. Rather than the CRD SSI Senior Manager arrange, attend and directly oversee all SSI commissions, a more cost-effective and appropriate approach may be to engage a CRD Commissions Coordinator to support the commissions and ensure that each commission has the information needed, including input from management, to address the issues at hand.

Salt Spring, like small communities across BC, has long relied on community resources—in-kind contributions from commissioners and other volunteers, local contractors who provide services, sometimes at cost or free, and non-profit organizations which serve the community in many ways. The continued use by CRD of community resources is essential to keeping service delivery costs commensurate with ratepayer ability to pay for them. Questionnaire responses indicate that current CRD senior management are discouraging expansion of the use of community resources.

In this report we recommend a number of strategies to address the issues identified by our research. Some of these are easy to implement “no-brainers”. We believe that all of them deserve a comprehensive review by the incoming CRD Director and senior CRD management. This review should include an analysis of Salt Spring’s CRD staffing and management needs, including administrative support for elected officials and commissions.

To conclude, most of the CRD services on SSI are delivered efficiently, the community appears motivated to establish a more positive relationship with the CRD, and the majority of the issues documented in this report appear resolvable, given strong leadership by the CRD Director.



## **1.0 Introduction**

This report provides an overview of how Capital Regional District (CRD) services are being delivered on Salt Spring Island (SSI), along with descriptions and examples of perceived problems and suggestions for solutions. These suggestions are designed to be a catalyst for in-depth and on-going discussions between the CRD Director, CRD management, and the Salt Spring community. It is hoped that these conversations will begin soon, and will revitalize the relationship between the CRD and SSI residents.

Land use planning and zoning on Salt Spring are the responsibility of the Islands Trust; other local community services are delivered by other agencies, primarily the CRD. This separation of responsibilities, along with the Trust's Preserve and Protect mandate, have helped to maintain Salt Spring's rural character and is unique to the Islands Trust area. While this separation of authority may sometimes cause public confusion, the CRD and the Islands Trust, through protocol agreements and working relationships at the staff and political level, have a long history of collaboration and cooperation.

### **1.1 CRD successes**

For the most part CRD provides and maintains infrastructure and delivers services reliably and efficiently on SSI. Problems and their potential solutions are the focus of this report, but we also recognize the successes that are part of the CRD record on SSI. These include Salt Spring's bus system—the most successful small community transit system in BC—the indoor swimming pool, the library, the recycling depot—all services or new facilities built on Salt Spring by the CRD. And although current affordable housing projects suffer from delays, SSI has received many millions of dollars from CRD for affordable housing. CRD Parks has protected hundreds of acres of land on SSI, including lands that were ultimately transferred to BC Parks and would not otherwise have been protected. Salt Spring has built kilometres of pathways through a unique Partners Creating Pathways group—about \$1 million in pathways has been constructed at a local taxpayer cost of about \$250,000.

Much that has been accomplished by the CRD over the years can be attributed to a strong community involvement in decision-making, and partnerships between CRD management and Salt Spring's volunteers. As issues with the CRD are examined in the following sections, it is essential to remember the importance of these collaborative components of Salt Spring's governance model.

### **1.2 Where the information came from**

Research for this report began in the fall of 2017 and was completed in July 2018. A literature review, including a brief review of legislation, was undertaken. Former and current members of CRD commissions, community volunteers with experience of working with CRD entities, former and current CRD Directors and former and current CRD staff were identified and 32 individuals agreed to be interviewed.

Each participant was asked to describe strengths and weaknesses of how CRD delivers services on SSI. They were asked for examples of problems they had experienced and for their ideas for remedying those problems.

Table 1: Roles of study participants

role	#
current or former SSI CRD directors	3
current or former CRD staff	4
current or former CRD commissioners (island-wide)	12
current or former CRD local service commissioners	14
current or former consultants to CRD	1
Other (includes various volunteer participation)	10

Note: the total number of roles is greater than the total number of participants since some individuals have served in more than one capacity.

The results of the interviews conducted during the fall of 2017 and spring of 2018 were compiled and analysed. Themes were identified and representative statements taken from the interviews were organised under three headings: CRD organization and management, CRD capital projects, and CRD commissions. A sub-set of statements was prepared for local sewer and water commissioners. In the summer of 2018 these statements were presented in person or by phone to 28 (those willing and available to respond) of the original 32 respondents as multiple choice questions using a modified Delphi technique to validate and refine the original findings.

While the information provided is anecdotal in character, it represents the experiences and opinions of 32 individuals with a combined total of over 275 years of working with the CRD on SSI. Given the number of people interviewed, the in-depth nature of their experience with CRD, and the number of times that the same concerns were expressed, we believe what follows represents a thoughtful and realistic summary of the problems and their causes.

The options for change and strategies for remediating areas of conflict and concern were in some cases suggested by the study participants and in others developed from our analysis and observations. Our conclusions are based on the findings, our analysis and observations.

### 1.3 Overview of the CRD structure

In British Columbia, local government including the CRD, is regulated primarily by the Community Charter and the Local Government Act. Regional districts provide services for unincorporated rural areas and regional services, such as a public transportation system or a sewage treatment plant. Regional districts enable small communities to combine their resources to achieve benefits of scale. For example, communities within a regional district can share professionals such as bylaw enforcement officers and engineers.

Regional district ratepayers pay only for services received. In the case of Salt Spring, with a few small exceptions, CRD ratepayers outside SSI do not help fund services specific to Salt Spring and Salt Spring does not fund services specific to other parts of the CRD. Salt Spring Island ratepayers do contribute to various CRD-wide services such as regional parks, hospital services, and emergency communications.

The CRD is the regional district for 13 municipalities and three Electoral Areas, of which SSI is one. The CRD is governed by a 24-member Board of Directors consisting of eleven representatives from the larger cities (Victoria 4, Langford 2, Saanich 5) and one director from each of the 13 other areas.

The CRD Board hires the CRD Chief Administrative Officer, and approves SSI bylaws and the CRD budget for SSI. It is rare for the board to decline a request from a director representing an

Electoral Area. They have little reason to do so since each area pays for its own services and those services do not impact the budgets of other parts of the region.

### **Service delivery**

CRD delivers services on Salt Spring Island in four ways:

1. Directly by CRD staff, with no commission involved;
2. By CRD staff guided by recommendations of a local Commission;
3. Through non-profit organizations which may be primarily or partly funded by SSI property taxes collected by CRD, and
4. Through contractors.

Services provided directly include: the emergency POD program, building inspection, and enforcement of CRD bylaws. (Islands Trust enforces its own bylaws.) Services provided by CRD SSI commissions include those overseen by the Parks and Recreation Commission (PARC) and by the SSI Transportation Commission (SSITC). Services primarily or partly funded through taxes to CRD but provided by non-profit organizations include the Library, SSI Search and Rescue and the recycling depot. CRD also contracts with the North Salt Spring Waterworks District to help maintain several SSI water treatment plants and water delivery systems. The SSI Transit service is operated by a private contractor.

### **Salt Spring CRD Commissions**

The majority of CRD services are provided through CRD commissions. Each commission was established through an Establishment Bylaw<sup>1</sup> that defines its structure and authority. Powers can be delegated to commissions either in their establishment bylaws or in separate delegation bylaws. Regional district boards have the authority to delegate most of their powers to local commissions. These powers include service delivery, hiring staff, consultants, project managers, and spending an annual budget amount authorized by the CRD board.<sup>2</sup> Currently, most SSI commissions are purely advisory in nature and make recommendations to the CRD Director.

Commissioners are usually community volunteers nominated by the CRD Director and appointed by the CRD Board. Commissioners serve without compensation. Commissions that are advisory only have no direct power over how the service is delivered. This means that power lies with the CRD Director, the CRD Board, and the CRD staff who actually deliver the services. Establishment bylaws can be and have been amended over time to give commissions more or less authority.

Salt Spring has twelve active CRD commissions, as follows:

1. SSI Parks and Recreation Commission (PARC)
2. SSI Transportation Commission (SSITC)
3. SSI Community Economic Development Commission (CEDC)
4. SSI Liquid Waste Disposal Commission
5. Fernwood Dock Management Commission
6. Beddis Water Service Commission (127 serviced properties)

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<sup>1</sup> Copies of enabling bylaws for the SSI CRD commissions may be obtained from Positively Forward.

<sup>2</sup> "Guide to Regional District Board Delegation to Committees and Commissions"  
[https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/british-columbians-our-governments/local-governments/governance-powers/guide\\_regional\\_district\\_delegation\\_to\\_committees.pdf](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/british-columbians-our-governments/local-governments/governance-powers/guide_regional_district_delegation_to_committees.pdf)

7. Cedar Lane Water Service Commission (38 serviced properties)
8. Cedars of Tuam Water Service Commission (16 serviced properties)
9. Fulford Water Service Commission (104 serviced properties)
10. Ganges Sewer Local Services Commission (418 serviced properties)
11. Highland - Fernwood Water Services Commission (Highland 244, Fernwood, 73)
12. Maliview Sewer Service Commission (approximately 101 serviced properties)

The seven local water and sewer commissions serve a small number of properties as indicated. Maliview Sewer and Highland and Fernwood water services have been CRD entities for many years. The four other water services were initially formed as improvement districts, each with its own elected board of trustees who controlled how each service was run and did much work as volunteers. Between 2002 and 2006 the SSI water services were informed by the province that new regulations required drinking water be treated to a higher standard and therefore some had to install new treatment plants. District trustees were advised that provincial grants were available to cover a large portion of the cost if the service was part of a regional government. Four water districts (Beddis, Cedar Lane, Fulford and Cedars of Tuam) became CRD entities in order to access provincial grants. North Salt Spring Waterworks District and a handful of independent small local water districts are not part of the CRD.

### **Role of the Salt Spring CRD Director**

The SSI CRD director is a member of the CRD board and every SSI CRD Commission, is required to sit on the Electoral Areas Services Committee which also includes directors for the Southern Gulf Islands and Juan de Fuca electoral areas, and may also join other Victoria CRD committees. The CRD director appoints an “Alternate” who can attend meetings on his or her behalf. The SSI CRD Director sets priorities for the activities of the SSI commissions and determines their annual requisitions, with advice from staff.

The CRD Director has significant discretionary funds at his/her disposal. These include funds allocated to Salt Spring from the Federal Community Works Program, also called the “gas tax funds” that are now over \$600,000 a year. The Director can ask the CRD Board to approve a pool of discretionary funds for a Grant-in-Aid program to support local initiatives. The Director can also create a fund to pay for administrative support.

### **Funding CRD services**

In 2017, tax revenue going to CRD from Salt Spring was \$6,188,293. The cost per average residential assessment was \$939.81. This figure does not include property taxes paid for specific local service areas, such as local water service areas and the Ganges sewer service area. SSI property taxes also fund region-wide services such as regional parks, the regional emergency program, and community health<sup>3</sup>.

In this report we consider the four commissions funded by island-wide taxes (Transportation, Economic Development, Parks and Recreation and the Fernwood Dock Commission) separately from the commissions serving a portion of the island and funded only by their users. We have included the Liquid Waste Disposal Commission with the four island-wide commissions. The Liquid Waste Disposal Commission is funded by a hybrid method, partly by an island-wide tax and partly by a user fee. The users are households who pay for pumping their septic tank, and the two sewage treatment plants who pay to dispose of sewage sludge.

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<sup>3</sup> March 29, 2017, Capital Regional District 2017 Financial Plan Summary Appendix 9, page 29-30.

## 2.0 CRD Salt Spring Island reported concerns

Many issues were raised during the initial interviews. To find out how many of these concerns were broadly shared by participants, a series of representative statements taken from the interviews were used as the basis of a questionnaire. A total of 54 statements were presented under the headings: “CRD organization and management”, “CRD capital projects”, “CRD commissions”, and “CRD local sewer and water commissions”. Of the 54 statements presented, 29 were agreed (or in three cases disagreed with) by two thirds or more of respondents. Eight statements were agreed by over 80% of respondents. In some cases respondents agreed with the essence of a statement but not with the wording and therefore chose to disagree or remain neutral. We have chosen to focus on the 29 statements where there was agreement by at least two thirds of those responding. By design, the statements in the questionnaire were not neutral, they were based on opinions provided by the participants. The full questionnaire with responses is provided in Appendix A.

The in-depth interviews that preceded the questionnaire give considerably more information, including examples of perceived problems, from the perspective of the individual participants. After each summary section of the questionnaire, we provide context based on information received during the interviews. Where we have quoted a participant, we have either used their name with permission or, where the participant did not wish to be identified, we assigned a random letter to each source, as in “Commissioner X stated...” Several interviewees currently involved with CRD stated that they did not want to jeopardise their relationships with CRD management.

### 2.1 CRD organization and management concerns

CRD is extremely risk-averse. CRD is self-insured and if CRD incurs legal costs or penalties as a result of court action, these costs are covered by CRD generally, not by the individual CRD area where the legal issue arose. Risk-avoidance often runs counter to creative problem solving and the use of volunteers to take on tasks. Commissioner Q expressed well what we heard often: *“The CRD seems to have evolved a culture which is neither time nor deadline conscious. Everything takes a back seat to “risk” perception.”*

Another common perspective was strongly voiced by former Commissioner Z: *“CRD often seems to me more concerned with process than with output. I consider that the crux of the problem.”*

Commissioner Y commented: *“When senior staff are motivated to solve a problem they are pretty effective and creative to find a way to accomplish the goal. But when they are not motivated, that is don’t agree with it being a priority, they adopt a “no can do” approach. Several commissioners are extremely hesitant to vote in support of something staff recommends against.”*

Salt Spring does not appear to be a priority for Victoria staff. Former CRD Director Garth Hendren commented: *“CRD in Victoria handle work for SSI off the side of their desk...they seem to regard work for SSI as a distraction from their real job.”*

#### CRD management perspective

Salt Spring Island CRD administration management commented that they are currently looking at the commission structure to see if there is a way to combine local services to improve service delivery. There are currently twelve separate advisory commissions for the delivery of parks and

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recreation, economic development, transportation, water and sewer. The CRD is responsible for preparing and presenting a budget for each commission, and some commissions such as parks and recreation have multiple service budgets. Local CRD staff members are involved with all commission meetings including preparing agendas, background material and minutes, and other follow up after each meeting. In 2017 the twelve commissions held 65 meetings, an average of 5.4 meetings a month (in 2015 and 2016 there were 75 meetings each year). Commissioners and other community volunteers may be unaware of how much time is required for staff to implement, or even investigate, possible new project work that has not previously been identified in the five-year capital plan. To help address project delays, CRD adopted a new procurement policy in May of 2017 to streamline the process and reduce requirements for smaller projects. Based upon an approved annual budget the CRD Board has delegated purchasing powers to officers and employees. (\$5 million to the Chief Administrative Officer, \$500,000 to General Managers and Chief Financial Officer and up to \$100,000 to the local Salt Spring Island Senior Manager, and \$30,000 to the local park and engineering managers.

**Communications and community relations**

We heard many stories about individual CRD staff who went out of their way to provide excellent service to islanders, but it is uncertain if good customer service is fostered by CRD policy. CRD job advertisements may include under “qualifications” phrases such as “Excellent communication (verbal and written) interpersonal and customer service skills”. Once in the workplace, it is not clear that customer service skills are acknowledged. We were told by former CRD employees that job performance evaluations do not include measuring how well staff interact with the community.

**Questionnaire results on CRD organization and management concerns**

Fourteen statements relating to general CRD organization and management were presented to the 28 respondents. Eight statements were agreed by at least two thirds of respondents and are presented in Table 2, ranked by level of support.

Table 2— agreed CRD organization and management concerns

question #	A. CRD Organization and Management	agree	disagree	neutral	don't know, N/A	# respondents	% agreement
1.	There should be a Salt Spring CRD Work Plan and Priorities List updated on a regular basis and available online (similar to the LTC).	26	1	0	1	28	93%
3.	A formal mechanism for inter-agency dialogue and collaboration is needed.	23	1	2	1	27	85%
14.	CRD should hire and retain staff who enjoy and work well with the community.	23	1	2	1	27	85%
4.	Lack of staff time to take on additional tasks is a major issue.	21	1	1	5	28	75%
8.	There appears to be an over-emphasis on process rather than results.	20	2	1	3	26	77%
9.	There is unwillingness to utilize volunteer resources.	20	2	4	2	28	71%
2.	The current CRD communications structure inhibits communications among commissioners and commissions and is ineffective for work at the local level where responsibilities often overlap.	20	4	2	2	28	71%
7.	The SSI CRD Director position involves too much work for one person.	19	8	0	1	28	68%

Statement A1 “*There should be a Salt Spring CRD Work Plan and Priorities List updated on a regular basis and available online (similar to the Local Trust Committee)*” received the greatest support of all questions with 93% in agreement.

Three statements in Table 2 (A1, A3 and A2) point to problems with **access to information**, and **coordination/collaboration issues**.

Two statements in Table 2 (A1 and A8) relate to **accountability**.

Two statements in Table 2 (A9 and A2) point to problems with **commission efficiency**.

Four statements in Table 2 (A14, A8, A9 and A2) point to **community relations issues**.

Statement A14 “*CRD should hire and retain staff who enjoy and work well with the community*” was supported by 85% respondents and may seem obvious. When considered with statements A4 “*Lack of staff time to take on additional tasks is a major issue*”, A8 “*There appears to be an over-emphasis on process rather than results*” and A9 “*There is unwillingness to utilize volunteer resources*”, it suggests a CRD management style that is not reflective of community needs.

## 2.2 Issues with CRD capital projects

There is an accumulating backlog of SSI projects that have been approved and funded, but have not progressed in a timely manner. Project delays are not new; in 2008 an attempt was made to address the problem. Former CRD Director Garth Hendren told us: “*During my term I asked for two additional staff people to be assigned to SSI, an engineer and a PARC manager in order to free the SSI senior manager to manage the commissions. It was hoped that this would speed up projects, but in fact it has led to more delayed projects.*” Examples include the North Ganges Transportation Plan and the Burgoyne Bay liquid waste facility.

### **Example: North Ganges Transportation Plan**

Engineering plans were complete in 2014 when islanders approved a \$1 million tax requisition for road and walkway improvements to finish the North Ganges Transportation Plan (NGTP) and improve safety on Ganges Hill. The Driftwood editorial of Nov 12, 2014 stated “*Making sure SSITC and the CRD stay on course to get the job done on time and on budget will be of paramount importance during the next four years.*” To date, progress on this plan consists of a \$30,000 pathway fronting the Gulf Islands Secondary School that was designed and managed by a SSI community volunteer organization, Partners Creating Pathways. The CRD Capital Plan 2018-2022 confirms that \$1,806,00 has accumulated in the SSI Transportation Commission (SSITC) reserve fund since 2014 for these stalled projects.

Delays continue. In April 2018 it became apparent that the CRD had neglected to consider archaeological requirements. The Driftwood reported on May 2: “*Commissioners voiced surprise the information was only coming to light now, when the project has been in the works for years. Conceptual designs for the NGTP were first submitted by consultants JE Anderson ... in 2010.*” Transportation Commissioner Nigel Denyer was quoted in the same article: “*It’s been four years since we went to referendum to get funding for this project and nothing much has happened in that four years.*”

Delays executing the NGTP have resulted in lost grant opportunities. In 2014, CRD received \$60,000 in grant support for the NGTP from Bike BC. Former SSITC Chair Donald McLennan commented: “*Since the NGTP funds remain unspent, CRD was ineligible to participate in the 2017-18 Bike BC grant program which offered \$1million infrastructure funding for NGTP-type projects*”.

**Example: Burgoyne Bay liquid waste facility**

This facility accepts biosolids (sewage sludge from sewage treatment plants and septage waste from household septic systems) for the whole island. It has been in need of upgrades for over 15 years. Many years ago, dewatering equipment had been installed to minimize costs to SSI ratepayers by reducing the amount of liquid waste trucked off island for disposal. After some years, this equipment began to fail and in 2012 it was determined that it would be less expensive to truck the liquid waste off island without dewatering than to keep fixing the old dewatering equipment. At that time, the Liquid Waste Disposal Commission also recommended that the waste-receiving portion of the plant be replaced for health and safety reasons as recommended in a 2011 report from Stantec Consulting Ltd.

An RFP to construct a new receiving station was issued in August of 2013. The project was delayed due to relocation of the selected contractor, the subsequent need to engage a new contractor, and then by lack of CRD staff. Because of these delays and other problems, the Liquid Waste Disposal Commission resigned “en masse” in 2015. In a letter to the Driftwood the commissioners described their attempts to design and build an environmentally sound treatment facility to reduce the costs of shipping waste off island and stated: “..we feel that there is a systemic problem in the way that capital projects have been handled by CRD in Victoria.... No consultation with the Commission was undertaken prior to [CRD Staff] deciding on the design of the upgrade. The notion that a \$4—\$4.5 million plant was required....should have been questioned by CRD early on. The Commission’s plan for a less expensive solution has not received serious consideration by CRD in Victoria.”

This commission has recently been reactivated and the CRD website indicates that a new receiving station is now under construction.<sup>4</sup>

**Limited engineering resources**

Lack of sufficient engineering resources was cited as one of the reasons for project delays. In the past, CRD engineers in Victoria oversaw projects. SSI projects are now primarily the responsibility of the CRD engineer on SSI. Since the SSI engineer position was created in 2012, SSI has had three consecutive engineers. There was a gap of several months between the departure of the second engineer and the arrival of the third. During this period CRD engineers in Victoria helped to keep at least one SSI project going. Work on other projects appears to have waited arrival of the new engineer. Several barriers to hiring and retaining engineers on SSI have been noted: difficulty in finding housing, lack of employment for spouse, and other limitations posed by a small island community.

**Limited use of community resources**

An issue raised repeatedly was the apparent resistance on the part of CRD to expand the use of in-kind contributions from commissioners and other volunteers. Salt Spring has many retired and working professionals who volunteer in our community. CRD commissioners represent an impressive range of professional experience and skills.

In the past, volunteers have been able to play a useful role in supporting projects. Former CRD Commissioner Peter Lake, a long-time resident told us: “ *Twenty years ago, all the commissions on Salt Spring were management commissions; in other words, they managed the service they represented. Volunteers provided services at little or no cost to the community.*”

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.crd.bc.ca/project/capital-projects/burgoyne-bay-liquid-waste-facility>



In 2012, the CRD General Manager and the North Ganges Transportation Plan (NGTP) Project Manager from Victoria asked the Chair of the Transportation Commission to act as community liaison on the Plan. His volunteer task was to sell the project to the community at large and, more specifically; to negotiate easement agreements with all 16 impacted property owners. This was so successful that this volunteer was told that his contribution allowed the easement agreements to be concluded “in warp speed.” In addition, there was no cost for what was previously a major budgetary concern.

Another recent example is the many pathways created through *Partners Creating Pathways*<sup>5</sup>, a collaboration between the CRD Transportation Commission, Island Pathways and the SSI office of the CRD working with the provincial Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MoTI).

### **Questionnaire results on problems with CRD capital projects**

Five of eight statements regarding CRD capital projects were agreed by at least two thirds of the respondents and are presented in Table 3.

*Table 3— agreed CRD capital project concerns*

question #	B. CRD Capital Projects	agree	disagree	neutral	don't know, N/A	# respondents	% agreement
6.	Liability concerns should be addressed by finding solutions rather than by limiting assistance by commissioners, volunteers and organizations	23	1	0	3	27	85%
4.	Projects could be completed more efficiently if qualified community organizations and volunteers were enlisted to help with certain aspects.	23	1	1	3	28	82%
1.	It now takes an unacceptable amount of time for CRD to complete SSI projects that are funded and approved.	22	1	2	2	27	81%
7.	The number of stalled or delayed projects has increased in recent years.	21	0	0	7	28	75%
5.	Liability concerns on the part of CRD limit the potential contributions of commissioners and other volunteers.	20	2	3	3	28	71%

Two statements in Table 3 (B1 and B7) relate to **delayed project completion times**.

Three statements in Table 3 (B4, B5 and B6) suggest **poor use of community resources**.

And two statements in Table 3 (B5 and B6) point to one cause for the poor use of community resources, namely **liability concerns on the part of CRD**.

## **2.3 Difficulties with CRD Commissions**

Not all commissions reported issues, and problems varied by commission. Parks and Recreation Commission (PARC) appeared to be well-managed and relatively problem-free. PARC has a substantial budget, its own manager and staff, and projects are undertaken and completed according to its strategic plan. PARC Commissioner Brian Webster told us, “PARC has a status report that lists all the ongoing projects and their status, so the PARC Commission knows how projects are progressing. Because PARC has its own manager and staff, projects usually progress

<sup>5</sup> See Appendix E for more information about the Partners Creating Pathways group.

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*within an acceptable time frame. But PARC commissioners aren't generally informed of the status of projects being undertaken by other commissions."*

**Poor communications**

Lack of easy avenues for the commissions to communicate with each other or with other Salt Spring agencies was identified as a problem. Currently the job of coordination between commissions and with other agencies is the responsibility of the CRD Director or the CRD staff. As indicated in question 16 below, this task has not been adequately addressed. Commissioners expressed that they would benefit from a better communication system.

**Management issues**

We heard examples of management taking actions which commissioners thought inappropriate. Two former commissioners told us they were pressured by management to resign their appointment. Commissioners have been told that all communications must go through the already very busy SSI CRD Manager. Commissioner M stated: *"A staff member in Victoria went out of their way to answer my questions and make sure I understood the situation. I felt I was really making progress on an important problem facing our commission until I was ordered by SSI management to stop talking with this person."*

**Questionnaire results on difficulties with CRD commissions**

Table 4— *agreed difficulties with CRD Commissions*

question #	C. CRD Commissions	agree	disagree	neutral	don't know, N/A	# respondents	% agreement
14.	Commissioners should be permitted to hold informal working group meetings without the presence of staff.	18	2	1	0	21	86%
9.	Commissioners have resigned or not continued as commissioners because of dissatisfaction with CRD management.	17	1	0	3	21	81%
16.	Better communications between various commissions are needed to avoid duplication of effort and lost opportunities.	17	1	1	2	21	81%
3.	My skills, and those of other commissioners, are (or were) not being utilized appropriately.	16	2	3	0	21	81%
8.	Commissioners are encouraged to take on tasks they are qualified for.	2	16	1	2	21	73%
5.	Lack of CRD staff resources limits SSI commissions.	15	1	4	1	21	71%
4.	SSI commissions are adequately supported by the CRD.	2	15	4	0	21	71%
1.	SSI commissions are currently under-utilized.	15	4	1	1	21	71%
7.	There is a lack of agreement between CRD staff and commissioners on their respective appropriate roles.	14	4	1	1	20	70%
17.	As a commissioner, I have major concerns with how the commissions are being managed by the CRD.	14	5	2	0	21	67%
2.	As a commissioner, I have at times felt patronized and treated with a lack of respect by some CRD staff.	14	6	0	1	21	67%

Eighteen statements regarding the functioning of CRD commissions were presented to the 21 commissioners responding to the questionnaire. Eleven of these statements were agreed, or in two cases disagreed, by at least two thirds of the respondents and are presented in Table 4.

Nine of the eleven statements in Table 4 (C14, C9, C16, C3, C8, C5, C4, C1 and C17) point to **problems with commission efficiency**.

Five statements in Table 4 (C9, C3, C8, C7 and C2) point to **community relations issues**.

Four statements in Table 4 (C14, C3, C8 and C1) suggest **inadequate use of volunteer resources**.

Three statements in Table 4 (C9, C5, C4) point to **management issues**, including the allocation of CRD resources.

One statement in Table 4 (C16) relates to a **coordination issue**.

## **2.4 Problems facing CRD local water and sewer commissions**

Most of the local water and sewer commissioners<sup>6</sup> described serious financial and communication challenges that were reportedly causing hardship for local ratepayers.

Commissioners expressed frustration at their inability to address the situation, and at difficulties in obtaining information.

The Ganges Sewer Local Services Commission stands out as relatively free of problems. We propose that this is because the plant was built to a high standard to start with, is well-resourced with dedicated staff, and has a relatively large number of properties (418) to support the service. A substantial reserve fund was set aside to pay a portion of the upgrade costs that are now being installed without delays as far as we know.

### **Cost, communications, staff support and accountability issues**

Whereas commissions that serve island-wide services, such as transportation or economic development are funded by an island-wide requisition, the local water and sewer commissions are each funded only by those properties which receive that particular service. These range in size from 16 properties to 244 properties, not including Ganges sewer with 418 properties. (See pages 3–4 for a complete list.)

Over the past few years, the four local water service commissions and Maliview Sewer Service Commission had to install new treatment plants to meet new provincial standards and hence have capital debts to be paid off by their ratepayers. They also face high costs for operation, maintenance and repair of aging portions of their infrastructure again all paid by local ratepayers. Commissioner Sharon Bywater commented: *“the stress is especially hard on the approximately 101 ratepayers who receive services from both the Highland-Fernwood water treatment plant and the Maliview sewage treatment plant. This is a neighbourhood of mostly small homes on small lots, of modest cost, owned mostly by island workers and blue-collar retirees. Many owners and renters owners have limited resources to pay the large and increasing fees necessary to support both an expensive water and sewer service.”*

One water district also is facing a severe water supply shortage during the summer.

Commissioners told us that either local management and/or some staff from Victoria do not take a problem solving approach, fail to adequately consider commissioners’ advice, and have opposed commissioners’ offers to help with tasks where appropriate, such as delivering notices to system users. These commissions are also limited by financial considerations to having only

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<sup>6</sup> We were not able to interview any of the current directors of the Cedars of Tuam water service so are not up to date on circumstances there.

one or two meetings a year because they are required to pay for a manager and a CRD minute taker to attend. Another concern shared by these commissions is the refusal of CRD to provide commissioners with contact information for their ratepayers.

These concerns are illustrated by the following quotes:

Commissioner Carole Eyles stated a request shared by other water and sewer commissions *“Our commission wants contact information for our users so we can contact them in case of problems and to share important information. CRD staff sometimes cannot address the issue immediately because they are off work or located off island and CRD might be over-burdened in a region-wide emergency such as an earthquake. Yet CRD staff have told us that our commission cannot have the users’ contact information because of privacy legislation and we should rely on the volunteer POD program. But, not all areas have active POD groups and water issues do not necessarily fall under the POD emergency program.”*

Commissioner M: *“Every year, CRD staff ask for more money and rate increases to cover increasing operational expenditures. In addition to operating and maintenance costs, staff are now asking the commissions to pay into a contingency fund, further driving up costs to individual ratepayers. They rarely make a suggestion on how to keep costs down.”*

Commissioner Carole Eyles: *“We feel railroaded or not listened to. We suspect that staff may feel badgered by our questions. The whole commission meeting process feels like it is for show rather than for meaningful consultation.”*

Commissioner Sharon Bywater: *“The staff want to do everything like they have always done it. The Maliview sewer system had some duplexes paying two user fees and some paying only one. For years, the staff could not find a path to correcting this inequity until a newer staff person suggested rewriting the bylaw. Why did it take years to get that answer? There seems to be resistance to make the effort on what is a small thing.”*

Commissioner Ruth Waldick commented: *“My experience, when I have attempted to present possible solutions to a problem is that there are particular staff who shoot down ideas directly or discourage their pursuit by citing costs we would incur instead of engaging with commissioners in problem solving.”*

### **Design and construction errors**

Commissioners who were in place when some water and sewer plants were built had a strong perception that mistakes were made by CRD in the selection of treatment systems, plant design, and project management and that these errors led to higher costs to local service area ratepayers. Examples shared with us were:

- Maliview Sewage Treatment Plant: original design did not fit on the site; as soon as the plant was operational, it was found to be significantly undersized for volumes received.
- Fernwood Highland Water: inadequate preliminary review and surveying (boundary marking errors at a site led to work outside the official zone on an adjoining property. This led to dismissal and replacement of the contractor.
- Fulford Water:
  - failure to connect 18 households during set up which had to be hooked up later at an additional, and unanticipated cost;
  - the plant is believed to be inappropriately large for the demand;

- purchase of non-standard meters that were returned prior to installation at 25% of purchase price because of lack of funds to complete work.
- Beddis Water: the plant is believed to be inappropriate for the particular challenges regarding the quality of the water supply.

Commissioner Simon Wheeler stated: “CRD seemingly has no liability or accountability for their errors or lack of action. All costs fall on the ratepayers.”

Commissioner Sharon Bywater commented: “Consumers are willing to pay costs of services but don’t want to pay for poorly planned and executed capital projects.”

**Questionnaire results on problems affecting local water and sewer commissions**

Fourteen statements regarding the local CRD water and sewer commissions were presented to the 14 local commissioners responding to the questionnaire. Five of these statements were agreed by at least two-thirds of the respondents and are presented in Table 5.

Table 5— agreed problems facing CRD local water and sewer commissions

question #	D. For CRD water and sewer commissioners (answer for your local Commission only)	agree	disagree	neutral	don't know, N/A	# respondents	% agreement*
7.	Operating and capital costs place an excessive burden on the relatively small number of properties serviced.	10	0	1	3	14	71%
2.	It is my belief that after accounting for inflation, both operating and capital costs under the CRD are greater than before joining the CRD.	9	0	2	3	14	64%
9.	Annual information-sharing meetings with other local commissions would be helpful.	9	0	3	2	14	64%
3.	CRD made mistakes in design decisions around the type of plant, location, etc. leading to higher costs to water service or sewer service ratepayers.	9	1	1	3	14	64%
10.	My commission has been holding an inadequate number of meetings per year. One reason is the cost to pay staff to be there.	9	1	1	3	14	64%

\* Because of rounding issues with the small number of respondents, the cut-off for inclusion in Table 5 is 64%

Four of the five statements in Table 5 (D7, D2, D3 and D10) relate to **cost concerns**.

One statement in Table 5 (D3) points to **project management issues**.

One statement in Table 5 (D9) relates to a **coordination issue**.

**2.5 Challenges facing the CRD Director**

Few comments were made during the interviews regarding the role of the CRD Director, which was surprising since the commissions advise the CRD Director, not CRD staff, and the CRD Director is the elected representative for all islanders on CRD matters. The comments that were received related to work load. We included the following statement in the questionnaire: “The SSI CRD Director position involves too much work for one person.” (A-7) When polled, 19 agreed, 8 disagreed, and 1 did not know. Some thought it depended on the individual director and on how much support he or she gets from staff. There is, as described below, considerable flexibility in how each electoral area CRD director chooses to undertake the role.

On Salt Spring in recent years there has been the expectation that the CRD Director (or his Alternate) will attend virtually all the numerous meetings on SSI and in Victoria related to the role. There is also a longstanding tradition that the Salt Spring CRD Director spend minimal funds on an assistant or other staff. We contacted the other two Electoral Area CRD Directors to ask about their approach.

**Juan de Fuca CRD Director Mike Hicks**

The Juan de Fuca electoral area includes the west coast of Vancouver Island from Otter Point to Port Renfrew, and the geographically separate communities of East Sooke, Malahat and Willis Point. (The Juan de Fuca electoral area is not within the Islands Trust area.) Regional director Mike Hicks was first elected in 2009 and is running for a fourth term. A May 8, 2018 article in the Sooke Mirror quotes Hicks:

*"[The Juan de Fuca] has reached a point that it's recognized now as an entity within the CRD, I don't want anyone to forget that over the next four years..."* The article continues: *"When Hicks first ran for CRD director, he ran on a ticket of creating positive change. He said it took more than nine years to get there due to politics and bureaucracy..."*

We asked Director Hicks about his approach. He said he made a point of being available to his commission chairs and constituents 24/7 and made problem-solving a priority. He gave less priority to attending commission meetings, except for those that he had chosen to chair. He trusted the commissioners to handle their commissions and did not get involved unless asked to do so. Commission chairs contacted Director Hicks immediately if they had problems or a request for CRD. He asked for requests to be put in an email that he forwarded to the appropriate person at CRD. Director Hicks regarded his extensive contacts with CRD staff to be important to getting things done, as was his relationship with CRD senior management. He assisted CRD staff by writing grant applications when deadlines were tight, and went to bat for his community, especially when CRD staff had other priorities. He regarded problem-solving as the role of the elected CRD Director, not CRD management. Because there were six distinct communities in the electoral area, and to increase the number of local elected representatives, Director Hicks established elected commissions in each community to advise him. He concluded with this note: *"...the Director's job is to tell staff what he or she wants done. Staff's job is to get it done."*

**Southern Gulf Islands CRD Director David Howe**

The Southern Gulf Islands (SGI) electoral area includes Galiano, Mayne, the two Penders, and Saturna islands along with a number of other small islands within the Islands Trust area. David Howe has served as CRD Director since 2011.

When we asked Director Howe for an interview, he directed us to the SGI Legislative Coordinator who provided the following information. The SGI Legislative Coordinator is a new part-time contract position intended to aid communications between SGI residents and CRD management. The SGI Legislative Coordinator attends some commission meetings and acts as a communications link between the SGI and Victoria. Director Howe has a part-time Administrative Assistant whose role is to take minutes, organize meetings and send out agendas. Director Howe has two residences, one in the SGI and one on the Saanich peninsula. This arrangement makes it easier for him to attend meetings in Victoria and connect with his constituents on the various islands. We also understand that his Alternate attends many SGI commission meetings.

## **2.6 Summary of reported issues**

We grouped the concerns identified in the interviews and follow up questionnaire into the following broad categories:

**Access to information issues:** including lack of public access to a current SSI CRD work plan with priorities and progress, lack of access to information regarding the various commissions, and lack of access by commissioners to information specific to an individual commission.

**Accountability and representation issues:** ratepayers might reasonably expect a similar degree of accountability, transparency and representation from the CRD on SSI as they currently receive from Salt Spring's Local Trust Committee. Financial accountability was a concern of the water and sewer commissions. A limited number of ratepayers must cover the cost of any poor decisions made by CRD over which neither the ratepayers nor the commissioners have control. Commissions are prevented from contributing volunteer resources to help keep costs down.

**Community relations issues:** including the under-utilization of community resources such as local businesses, organizations and volunteers; what was perceived as disrespect on the part of CRD management to commissioners and other community volunteers; lack of a system to address complaints; and little priority placed by CRD on customer relations.

**Project delivery problems:** including project delays, and reports of CRD errors in planning, designing and managing some capital projects.

**Commission efficiency and effectiveness issues:** including under-utilization of the skills and professional qualifications of commissioners; an emphasis by CRD on process rather than results; insufficient use of a problem solving approach; and shortage of CRD staff time to adequately serve the many commissions.

**Coordination and collaboration needs:** including a mechanism to enable the key agencies providing services to SSI to share information on a regular basis, and the need for better coordination and collaboration between CRD commissions and related agencies.

A **structural issue** affected some local water and sewer service commissions. There were too few ratepayers in several of the local service areas to comfortably cover costs of water and sewer services.

## **3.0 Strategies and Recommendations**

In this section we list potential strategies and recommend actions to address the concerns identified in the previous section. The suggestions that follow apply only to those aspects of CRD operations on SSI that have been identified as problematic and do not imply that other Salt Spring CRD functions are in need of attention.

We begin by presenting thirteen recommendations. These are followed by a one page summary table, Table 6, which summarizes the recommended strategies and also includes strategies for consideration which were suggested by the study participants and by the Positively Forward working group. The issues that each strategy would address are indicated by the checkmarks showing intended benefits.

### ***Strategies to improve information flow, accountability and representation***

Each of the following three recommendations provides several benefits as indicated in Table 6.

#### **Recommendation 1**

##### **Provide a public, up-to-date Salt Spring CRD Work Plan with priorities and status reports**

Access to the current SSI CRD Work Plan would be useful for all the commissions and members of the public. The SSI CRD Work Plan should include overall priorities, a list of projects, including long-delayed items, and the status of each, along with the commission and CRD staff person handling the file. It should be available at the SSI CRD office, and online.

An example of how this information could be presented is provided in the SSI Local Trust Committee (LTC) meeting agenda packages. The agenda packages include work program priorities, projects, and list individual applications and the status of each item. This information provides transparency for the elected officials and the public.

There is no comparable list available to the public for SSI CRD projects. The CRD has a SSI Service Plan for 2016-2019 available online.<sup>7</sup> The plan provides an overview of services and projects that could form the basis for regular status updates, but it is not current.

The information to be provided in the SSI CRD Work Plan should already be available to the Salt Spring Manager and the CRD Director and this recommendation should therefore be easy to meet.

#### **Recommendation 2**

##### **Hold regular SSI inter-agency information meetings between CRD, Islands Trust, and other local service delivery agencies**

Inter-agency meetings were held on SSI in the past but the practice was discontinued. The CRD and the Islands Trust should re-establish regular inter-agency meetings to share information and trouble-shoot problems. Consideration should be given to both the Islands Trust and CRD passing bylaws to institutionalize the meetings to ensure they continue to occur regularly as part of ongoing business. An inter-agency agreement could establish shared procedures and responsibilities.

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<sup>7</sup> [https://www.crd.bc.ca/docs/default-source/corporate-communications-pdf/service-plans/ea-saltspringadmin.pdf?sfvrsn=7e0956ca\\_14](https://www.crd.bc.ca/docs/default-source/corporate-communications-pdf/service-plans/ea-saltspringadmin.pdf?sfvrsn=7e0956ca_14)



The following positions / agencies could be included:

- SSI CRD Director and commission chairs (and/or LCC chair if established)
- SSI Islands Trust Trustees
- Representatives of the emergency services (First Response, Fire Protection, Search and Rescue, BC Ambulance, Emergency and Disaster Response)
- North Salt Spring Waterworks District
- Royal Canadian Mounted Police
- Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure, including the on-island maintenance contractor
- Others, when appropriate, such as Island Health, Community Services, Harbour Authority, BC Ferries, etc.

In our view these meetings should be advertised and open to the public. Ideally, there would be opportunity for public input. Operating funds and staff support should be provided by the CRD, Islands Trust or both. For workload and administrative purposes, a contractor could be hired to coordinate the meetings.

### **Recommendation 3**

#### **Establish an elected Salt Spring CRD Local Community Commission**

An elected Salt Spring CRD Local Community Commission (LCC)<sup>8</sup> would provide a strong institutional mechanism for coordination of projects and services, would be accountable to ratepayers, would increase local representation, and would provide more opportunity for public input and engagement. The provincial Local Government Act authorizes regional districts to create an LCC to oversee services in a rural area. The SSI LCC would be comprised of either 4 or 6 commissioners, elected at large, plus the CRD Director. The creation of an LCC would not change the role of the SSI CRD Director as the voting member on the CRD Board of Directors.

The LCC's powers would depend on the degree of delegation approved by the CRD Board and permitted by the Local Government Act. Initially the LCC might share some of the SSI CRD Director's responsibilities such as setting overall priorities for local services, budget preparation, overseeing the SSI CRD Advisory Commissions, and monitoring progress on major infrastructure projects.

The process to establish the SSI LCC must be championed by the CRD Director, and would begin with a study. Islanders must approve the LCC through referendum. The CRD Board would then pass an Establishment bylaw to create the Salt Spring LCC. A delegation bylaw would set out the authority and responsibilities delegated to the LCC.

The Province contributes \$5,000 per year toward the annual operating costs of each of the five existing LCCs, which serve smaller populations than Salt Spring. It would be reasonable to ask the Province to scale up its contribution to a Salt Spring LCC in view of our size. The appropriate amount for this provincial contribution might depend on the extent of powers delegated to the SSI LCC by the CRD Board.

Establishing a Salt Spring LCC will involve a lengthy public process and has cost implications. However it would provide a long-term solution for several SSI CRD issues and is therefore a key recommendation.

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<sup>8</sup> See Appendix C for more information on LCCs.

As an interim measure, the strategy of holding periodic public All-Commission meetings— Recommendation 4—would provide some of the benefits of an LCC and could be implemented in 2019.

***Strategies to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of all Salt Spring CRD Commissions***

The following five recommendations address the functioning of all the SSI CRD commissions. The strategies each provide several benefits as indicated in Table 6.

**Recommendation 4**

**Hold periodic public Salt Spring CRD All-Commission meetings**

Public information meetings involving representatives from each CRD commission would inform the commissions of each other’s activities. The meetings would also create the opportunity for commissions to share resources, and would facilitate the formation of informal working groups on specific topics. All-Commission meetings should be informal and allow time for open discussion and public input. The meetings could be institutionalized through a CRD bylaw that made them mandatory, set the minimum frequency, and identified any required items for discussion such as the budget. This latter step should be taken if an LCC is not established.

All-Commission meetings could be established almost immediately. They require a modest level of coordination and administrative resources.

**Recommendation 5**

**Allow commissioners to meet in informal working groups**

Several SSI CRD commissions have requested permission to meet informally outside of regularly scheduled meetings and without the presence of CRD staff. Such meetings would enable commissioners to explore issues in more depth than is possible in a scheduled meeting and would provide opportunity for recommendations to be formulated to bring to scheduled meetings. Informal working group meetings would increase the effectiveness of commissions and would facilitate better use of commissioners’ expertise.

Informal working group meetings are not a violation of legislated Open Meeting requirements if guidelines are followed<sup>9</sup>. Working groups should be able to meet without CRD staff present if discussions are informal and no decisions are made.

This recommendation can and should be implemented immediately. There are no costs or CRD staff requirements. The Open Meeting guidelines provided by the BC Ombudsperson clarify the status of informal meetings and the CRD should follow these guidelines.

**Recommendation 6**

**Appoint a Salt Spring CRD Commission Coordinator**

The commission coordinator would support the commissions by providing information and by coordinating meetings, and would act as the ‘go-to’ resource person for the commissions and commissioners. A coordinator would considerably improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the commissions by addressing information flow and management availability issues, and by generally supporting commission initiatives. Specific tasks could include:

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<sup>9</sup> See Appendix B for a summary of the BC Ombudsperson report on open meetings.

## Improving CRD Service Delivery on Salt Spring Island, BC: options for positive change

- Coordinate commission meetings and All-Commission meetings;
- Attend commission meetings;
- Assist the commissions in developing work plans;
- Support commission initiatives;
- Coordinate information flows;
- Handle commissioner requests for technical and other information from CRD staff and other agencies;
- Act as the conduit between the SSI CRD Senior Manager and the commissions.

The position would also support both the CRD Director and the SSI Senior Manager. The commission coordinator position could be structured in various ways, including the following:

- New CRD staff position, reporting to the SSI CRD Senior Manager;
- Reassigning existing CRD staff, reporting to the SSI CRD Senior Manager;
- New CRD contract position, reporting to the CRD Director;
- Included in the paid duties of the Alternate Director, reporting to the CRD Director.

There is, as shown above, considerable flexibility in determining how to create this new role. The decision should be made by the incoming SSI CRD Director in consultation with senior management.

### **Recommendation 7**

#### **Provide an annual orientation session for all commissioners**

An annual orientation session would include information for new commissioners, a refresher for existing commissioners, an update on the status of SSI CRD projects, and information on any changes to legislation and CRD policies and procedures that may affect commissions and commissioners. The annual session would also provide an opportunity for commissioners to connect with each other. The annual orientation would better inform commissioners of their roles and responsibilities, and would provide a common understanding of expectations. It would also provide an opportunity to build good community relations.

This recommendation has very modest associated costs and could be implemented immediately.

### **Recommendation 8**

#### **Allow and encourage commissioners to take on tasks for which they are qualified**

Volunteer contributions can play an important role in reducing project delays, and in reducing operational and capital costs. Below are examples of tasks that CRD commissioners and other volunteers have undertaken in the past and could be permitted to do again:

- Identifying grant opportunities and preparing draft grant applications for review by staff, e.g. Bike BC funding applications;
- Drafting work plans and critical paths for new programs for commission review, e.g. the PCP critical path;
- Recruiting and organizing volunteers to conduct surveys (e.g. annual bike count);
- Conducting research for commissions (e.g. obtaining crash statistics for problematic intersections which led to installation of a 4-way stop at Central);
- Preparing handbooks and historical summaries for each commission, e.g. the SSITC Retrospective Handbook;
- Communicating with water and sewer district ratepayers;

- Providing research to assist in planning specialized construction projects, and serving on a construction project oversight committee.

### ***Strategies to assist the Salt Spring CRD Local Service (water and sewer) Commissions***

The following two recommendations are specific to the seven local water and sewer service commissions. Recommendations 4—8 above also apply to local service commissions.

#### **Recommendation 9**

##### **Provide local water and sewer service commissions with ratepayer contact information**

Lack of this information makes it impossible for commissions to contact ratepayers with information about scheduled maintenance, water conservation measures, or in the event of an emergency. CRD staff may not be able to contact ratepayers in a timely manner.

Sections 33.1 and 33.2 of the BC Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act<sup>10</sup> allow disclosure of personal information, including contact information, to specified categories of individuals—including officers and associates of service providers—if the information is necessary for the performance of their duties. If commissioners qualify as either officers or associates for the purposes of this legislation and if their duties were to include contact with users, it seems that they could be provided with user contact information. It is possible that commissioners could also be provided with usage records if their defined duties required access to this information.

#### **Recommendation 10**

##### **Consult with the local water and sewer service commissions on organizational improvements to better serve their ratepayers**

This recommendation would involve a public consultation process, led by the affected commissions, to review how their authority and organization could be improved to better serve their ratepayers.

The current CRD Director and CRD management are considering the amalgamation of local water and sewer service commissions. It is important to fully involve the local service commissions and their ratepayers in these discussions, and to consider a range of options.

For example, the local water and sewer service commissions may be interested in having more operational authority. This strategy could involve a request from the CRD Director to the CRD Board to pass new Establishment Bylaws for some commissions to receive greater operational authority, following local service ratepayers' approval.

There are four SSI water service Improvement Districts (not part of the CRD) operated by volunteer boards. Like the Improvement Districts, the local water and sewer commissions would hire qualified professionals to operate the service under their supervision. Currently much of the actual operation and maintenance of the water services is done by the North Salt Spring Waterworks District under contract with the CRD. This relationship could continue under an operational commission or non-profit organization. CRD may have concerns about accepting liability for the actions of an operational commission, or non-profit organization, however some

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<sup>10</sup> [http://www.bclaws.ca/Recon/document/ID/freeside/96165\\_03#division\\_d2e4176](http://www.bclaws.ca/Recon/document/ID/freeside/96165_03#division_d2e4176)

method is needed to relieve local water and sewer area ratepayers, who are currently financially liable, with no recourse, for everything that CRD does, or fails to do.

The key part of this recommendation is that any planned reorganization of the local water and sewer service commissions should be developed through a consultative process with the commissions and their ratepayers, and final approval should rest with the ratepayers.

***Strategies to foster stronger relationships with Salt Spring residents***

While the majority of our recommendations should help revitalize community relations, the following two recommendations focus on CRD's public image.

**Recommendation 11**

**Prioritize good community relations within CRD corporate culture**

Many local and Victoria based CRD staff have had excellent relationships with the SSI community. Current CRD procedures limit input and information flows between commissioners and other volunteers and the CRD. This arrangement may have internal efficiencies, but it comes at the cost of good community relations.

CRD should acknowledge the experience and dedication of commissioners and other volunteers and utilize their skills accordingly. Commissioners should be given full explanations if requests cannot be met, should be supported in searching for solutions to issues, and informed of the reasons why specific rules are in place.

Islanders also need to be respectful of the limitations of staff resources. Respect and understanding going both ways builds confidence and trust. Realistic and publicly known priorities (Recommendation 1) should reduce pressure on staff.

CRD staff who have supportive and positive relationships with commissioners and other community volunteers make themselves available, provide useful and meaningful assistance when needed, and communicate a sincere interest in helping islanders. These attributes should be included in job performance evaluations.

**Recommendation 12**

**Adopt a problem-solving approach**

CRD staff are capable of creative problem-solving. We suggest that when staff are asked to help solve a problem, they respond by giving the question careful consideration and exploring options. The community would welcome collaborative problem-solving to increase innovation and cost efficiencies.

***Strategy to reduce costs and project delays***

Our final recommendation highlights the importance of CRD partnerships with community organizations in providing timely and cost-effective service delivery.

**Recommendation 13**

**Continue and expand service delivery by Salt Spring's not-for-profit groups, by local contractors, and by other local service providers**

Non-profit societies currently provide services under contract with CRD or receive funding from CRD. The SSI Library is run by the Library Association, supported financially by a CRD property tax requisition. The SSI Recycling Depot is operated by Community Services, and the ArtSpring theatre and gallery receives a subsidy from the CRD. The SSI Partners Creating Pathways group provides an excellent example of the cost savings that can be achieved when the CRD partners with other agencies and a non-profit organization using local contractors<sup>11</sup>. All these initiatives should continue to be actively supported by the CRD.

Expanded use of local contractors, for-profit or non-profit, could reduce demands on staff and the CRD Director. For example, CRD could contract out some meeting coordination functions (See Recommendation 6). Other services could also be considered for partnerships or contracting out to local providers. For example on Pender, the Pender Islands Fire Protection Society operates the Pender Islands Fire Rescue service mainly funded by a CRD tax requisition<sup>12</sup>. A similar arrangement could be explored with the Salt Spring Island Fire Protection District for improved community priority-setting, access to grants, and other potential benefits.

The critical aspects of this final recommendation are that the existing relationships with community partners should be continued, and that the number of services delivered by community partners should be expanded wherever such arrangements are effective and cost-efficient.

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<sup>11</sup> See Appendix E for case study of Partners Creating Pathways.

<sup>12</sup> See Appendix D for more information on the Pender Islands Fire Protection Society model.

*Table 6: Possible strategies and their intended benefits*

Possible Strategies	access to information	accountability & representation	coordination & collaboration	project delivery	commission efficiency & effectiveness	community relations & community resources
<b>Strategies included in report recommendations</b>						
Provide a public, up-to-date Salt Spring CRD Work Plan with priorities and status reports (e.g. see Local Trust Committee agenda packages).	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Hold regular inter-agency information meetings.	✓		✓	✓		
Establish an elected Salt Spring CRD Local Community Commission.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Hold periodic public Salt Spring CRD All-Commission meetings and encourage informal information sharing between commissions and commissioners.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Allow commissioners to meet in informal working groups without the presence of staff, provided rules are followed.				✓	✓	✓
Appoint a Salt Spring CRD Commission Coordinator to support the commissions, the CRD Director and the SSI CRD manager.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Provide an annual orientation session for all commissioners to share information and review roles and responsibilities.	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Allow and encourage commissioners to take on tasks for which they are qualified.				✓	✓	✓
Provide local water and sewer service commissions with ratepayer contact information.	✓	✓			✓	✓
Consult with the local water and sewer service commissions on organizational improvements to better serve their ratepayers.		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Prioritize good community relations within CRD corporate culture.	✓	✓			✓	✓
Adopt a problem-solving approach.			✓	✓	✓	✓
Continue and expand service delivery by Salt Spring's not-for-profit groups and by other organizations.			✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Additional strategies to consider</b>						
Establish a grievance procedure, including third party investigation through the CRD Director, and/or through a new CRD Ombudsperson.		✓				✓
Provide assistance for the CRD Director (or Local Community Commission if formed).		✓		✓	✓	
Adopt the collaborative 'Partners Creating Pathways' model for aspects of other capital projects.			✓	✓	✓	✓
Increase engineering resources and project management capacity by adding a SSI engineer, or by using Victoria engineering staff, or by engaging contract engineers and project managers.				✓	✓	
Hire staff who enjoy working with the public.	✓					✓
Support each SSI commission by providing necessary information and resources and by ensuring that commission recommendations are followed.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Reduce staffing of commission meetings by utilizing teleconferencing and contract minute-takers, and eliminate enforced time limits.					✓	✓
Address liability concerns by finding solutions rather than by limiting assistance by commissioners, volunteers and organizations				✓	✓	✓
Provide greater financial accountability to ratepayers through adjustments to financial reporting for affected commissions.	✓	✓			✓	✓
Provide administrative services to all commissions from CRD Director's administrative funds.	✓			✓	✓	

## APPENDICES

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**APPENDIX A Follow-up Questions—Summary of questionnaire responses**

The statements in this questionnaire came from participants in the initial round of interviews. The purpose of the questionnaire is to measure the degree to which the group of participants as a whole agrees or disagrees with the statements made by one or more participants in the earlier interviews.

*In what capacities have you been involved with the CRD? (please check all that apply):*

Commissioner on island-wide commission ; Local water or sewer commissioner ; Member of non-profit organization ; CRD Director ; CRD employee ; other (describe) \_\_\_\_\_  
 How many years associated with the CRD. \_\_\_\_\_

**Summary of roles of respondents**

<b>capacities</b>	<b># respondents</b>
Commissioner, island-wide commission	13
Local water or sewer commissioner	14
member of non-profit organization	11
SSI CRD director	3
CRD employee	2
other (describe)	7
How many years associated with CRD?	276 yrs

<b>A. CRD Organization and Management</b>		agree	disagree	neutral	don't know, N/A	# respondents	% agreement
1.	There should be a Salt Spring CRD Work Plan and Priorities List updated on a regular basis and available online (similar to the LTC).	26	1	0	1	28	93%
2.	The current CRD communications structure inhibits communications among commissioners and commissions and is ineffective for work at the local level where responsibilities often overlap.	20	4	2	2	28	71%
3.	A formal mechanism for inter-agency dialogue and collaboration is needed.	23	1	2	1	27	85%
4.	Lack of staff time to take on additional tasks is a major issue.	21	1	1	5	28	75%
5.	Given the large number of island facilities & projects—existing and authorized—at least two engineers dedicated to SSI projects are needed.	16	4	0	8	28	57%
6.	There is insufficient opportunity for public input and engagement.	18	7	3	0	28	64%
7.	The SSI CRD Director position involves too much work for one person.	19	8	0	1	28	68%
8.	There appears to be an over-emphasis on process rather than results.	20	2	1	3	26	77%
9.	There is unwillingness to utilize volunteer resources.	20	2	4	2	28	71%
10.	Staff abilities to interact effectively with the community and provide good customer/public service do not appear to be valued by CRD.	18	6	1	3	28	64%
11.	The CRD has become more hierarchical and bureaucratic over the last several years.	18	4	3	3	28	64%
12.	It appears to me that SSI does not receive its fair share of staff resources from Victoria.	9	6	3	9	27	33%
13.	CRD staff often appear to lack a problem-solving approach.	18	4	3	3	28	64%
14.	CRD should hire and retain staff who enjoy and work well with the community.	23	1	2	1	27	85%

**APPENDIX A Follow-up Questions—Summary of questionnaire responses (cont)**

<b>B. CRD Capital Projects</b>		agree	disagree	neutral	don't know, N/A	# respondents	% agreement
1.	It now takes an unacceptable amount of time for CRD to complete SSI projects that are funded and approved.	22	1	2	2	27	81%
2.	The process to approve, tender and award contracts is more appropriate to large multi-million dollar projects than for small SSI projects. .	16	7	2	3	28	57%
3.	When selecting contractors, CRD procurement procedures appear to select the lowest bid rather than giving weight to quality of work and materials	16	2	0	9	27	59%
4.	Projects could be completed more efficiently if qualified community organizations and volunteers were enlisted to help with certain aspects.	23	1	1	3	28	82%
5.	Liability concerns on the part of CRD limit the potential contributions of commissioners and other volunteers.	20	2	3	3	28	71%
6.	Liability concerns should be addressed by finding solutions rather than by limiting assistance by commissioners, volunteers and organizations	23	1	0	3	27	85%
7.	The number of stalled or delayed projects has increased in recent years.	21	0	0	7	28	75%
8.	The SSI Transportation Commission 'Partners Creating Pathways' model should be applied to other capital projects.	17	2	1	8	28	61%

<b>C. CRD Commissions</b>		agree	disagree	neutral	don't know, N/A	# respondents	% agreement
1.	SSI commissions are currently under-utilized.	15	4	1	1	21	71%
2.	As a commissioner, I have at times felt patronized and treated with a lack of respect by some CRD staff.	14	6	0	1	21	67%
3.	My skills, and those of other commissioners, are (or were) not being utilized appropriately.	16	2	3	0	21	76%
4.	SSI commissions are adequately supported by the CRD.	2	15	4	0	21	10%
5.	Lack of CRD staff resources limits SSI commissions.	15	1	4	1	21	71%
6.	Advice/recommendations provided by commissions is usually followed and is rarely ignored without explanation.	8	11	2	0	21	38%
7.	There is a lack of agreement between CRD staff and commissioners on their respective appropriate roles.	14	4	1	1	20	70%
8.	Commissioners are encouraged to take on tasks they are qualified for.	3	16	1	2	22	14%
9.	Commissioners have resigned or not continued as commissioners because of dissatisfaction with CRD management.	17	1	0	3	21	81%
10.	SSI commissions could be eliminated without noticeable impact on service delivery.	4	14	1	2	21	19%
11.	SSI commissions should be given more authority to increase their effectiveness.	12	4	1	4	21	57%
12.	Commission meetings are often over-staffed.	12	3	5	1	21	57%
13.	Apart from the manager responsible, senior staff should attend only those agenda items where their input is required.	11	7	1	2	21	52%
14.	Commissioners should be permitted to hold informal working group meetings without the presence of staff.	18	2	1	0	21	86%
15.	As a commissioner, I have not been informed about which of my commission's projects have priority, and why, and their target completion dates.	10	10	0	0	20	50%
16.	Better communications between various commissions are needed to avoid duplication of effort and lost opportunities.	17	1	1	2	21	81%
17.	As a commissioner, I have major concerns with how the commissions are being managed by the CRD.	14	5	2	0	21	67%
18.	The CRD Commissions were more effective in the past.	11	3	2	4	20	55%

**APPENDIX A Follow-up Questions—Summary of questionnaire responses (cont)**

<b>D. For CRD water and sewer commissioners</b> (answer for your local Commission only)		agree	disagree	neutral	don't know, N/A	# respondents	% agreement
1.	My water or sewer district was not accurately informed of the impact on costs before joining the CRD.	4	2	2	6	14	29%
2.	It is my belief that after accounting for inflation, both operating and capital costs under the CRD are greater than before joining the CRD.	9	0	2	3	14	64%
3.	CRD made mistakes in design decisions around the type of plant, location, etc. leading to higher costs to water service or sewer service ratepayers.	9	1	1	3	14	64%
4.	My commission complained to the CRD about cost overruns and requested explanation but did not receive an adequate response.	6	2	0	6	14	43%
5.	My commission now receives adequate reports on costs and operations.	5	4	0	5	14	36%
6.	My commission currently has larger than anticipated debts resulting from CRD construction.	4	4	1	5	14	29%
7.	Operating and capital costs place an excessive burden on the relatively small number of properties serviced.	10	0	1	3	14	71%
8.	My commission has insufficient authority to be effective.	7	4	1	2	14	50%
9.	Annual information-sharing meetings with other local commissions would be helpful.	9	0	3	2	14	64%
10.	My commission is has been holding an inadequate number of meetings per year. One reason is the cost to pay staff to be there.	9	1	1	3	14	64%
11.	My commission would like to hold meetings without staff being present.	8	1	0	5	14	57%
12.	CRD staff appear unaware of the impact of rising costs on ratepayers.	8	5	0	1	14	57%
13.	In hindsight, I regret my district's decision to join the CRD.	4	4	0	6	14	29%
14.	I believe my commission receives value for cost from CRD	2	6	3	3	14	14%

## **APPENDIX B                      Summary of BC Ombudsperson guide to Open Meeting laws**

### **Open Meetings Best Practices Guidelines**

#### **Source Document**

The following synopsis is based upon the Best Practices Guide published by the BC Ombudsperson, Special Report No. 34 to the Legislative Assembly of BC, September 2012. The Report clarifies what constitutes a “meeting” in order to assist local governments to recognize when open meeting laws apply.

#### **When Do Open Meeting Laws Apply?**

In order to comply with the open meeting legislation, it is important to know when it applies. The *Community Charter* does not define the word “meeting” so local governments are sometimes unsure about when an informal gathering is in fact a meeting subject to the open meeting requirements. Courts have determined “*a council meeting is any gathering to which all members of council have been invited; and that is a material part of council’s decision-making process.*”

#### **The Nature of the Group**

The composition of any gathering is key in determining whether a gathering is a meeting. The presence of a quorum or the full membership of a council or other body is more likely to constitute a meeting, while a gathering of smaller groups is less likely to do so. Groups that exercise a decision-making authority are more likely to have their gatherings considered meetings than groups who study issues or solely recommend action.

#### **The Nature of the Discussion**

A second key factor in determining whether a gathering constitutes a meeting is the nature of the discussion. This depends on whether a gathering involves discussing matters that deprive the public of “the opportunity to observe a material part of the decision-making process”.

#### **The Nature of the Gathering**

Where and how a meeting is conducted are less significant factors in determining whether a gathering is a meeting. Gatherings outside of scheduled meetings for training, research, planning or other purposes can be referred to as workshops, shirt sleeve sessions, retreats, etc. There can be uncertainty about whether these gatherings are in fact meetings that should be held in public. It is not possible to exhaustively define workshops and other less formal gatherings or to make generalizations about whether open meeting requirements apply to them.

#### **Working Group Meetings**

A gathering is less likely a meeting if:

- there is no quorum of board, council or committee members present
- the gathering takes place in a location not under the control of the council or board members
- it is not a regularly scheduled event
- it does not follow formal procedures
- no voting occurs

#### **Conclusion**

CRD Commissions on Salt Spring are free to form “Working Groups” for conducting research, for planning or for other purposes provided that:

- there is no quorum of Commission members present
- discussions take place on an ad hoc basis
- gatherings take place in locations which are not under the control of the CRD
- no formal procedures are followed
- the Group has no formal decision-making authority but exists to study issues and make recommendations
- the output of the Working Group is intended for presentation to the full Commission for consideration and discussion at a formal public meeting.

## **APPENDIX C                      Establishing an elected CRD Local Community Commission on SSI**

A Salt Spring Local Community Commission would provide a strong institutional mechanism for coordination of projects and services and would provide for active engagement by the public. Provincial law (the Local Government Act) authorizes regional districts (for SSI, the CRD) to create a Local Community Commission (LCC) to oversee regional district services in a rural area. The LCC would be comprised of either 4 or 6 commissioners (elected at large) plus the CRD Director. The creation of an LCC would not change the role of the CRD Director as the voting member on the CRD Board of Directors.

An LCC's powers would depend on the degree of delegation approved by the CRD Board and permitted by the Local Government Act. Initially an LCC might share the following responsibilities that are now the responsibility of the SSI CRD Director:

- set overall priorities for local services,
- recommend to the CRD board the allocation of Salt Spring's share of Gas Tax funding – currently \$600,000/year,
- over-see Salt Spring's CRD-appointed advisory commissions,
- prepare budgets for CRD Board approval - setting tax and expenditure levels ,
- monitor the delivery of local services, including the progress of major infrastructure projects,
- host public meetings to discuss local issues,
- communicate with local electors regarding local service delivery and other issues, and
- recommend new bylaws or bylaw amendments for passage by the CRD Board.

Additional responsibilities that could be delegated to an LCC include:

- approve expenditures within approved budgets,
- decide operational policies and procedures for local CRD services,
- taking over the duties of some existing CRD commissions,
- appointing commissioners to Salt Spring advisory commissions,
- plan local service delivery,
- develop or supervise the preparation of grant applications e.g. for infrastructure projects,
- provide guidance/direction to the CRD Director regarding matters to be decided by the CRD Board and/or the CRD Electoral Areas Committee,
- contract for services - including for delivery by non-profit or for-profit organizations,
- develop protocol agreements to provide for consultation and coordination with other agencies including the Islands Trust, Improvement Districts, MoTI, the RCMP and others.

Powers delegated to an LCC could change over time. A more limited set of powers might be delegated initially and more responsibilities added once the LCC has established a record of responsible governance. The Local Government Act requires that final approval of budgets and bylaws would remain the responsibility of the CRD Board.

As is currently the case, major new capital projects and services would require voter approval. Existing advisory commissions could remain in place. Alternatively, one or more of the existing commissions could be dissolved with the LCC assuming their responsibilities.

We suggest the LCC hold monthly meetings open to the public, with a "town hall" session for public comment similar to the Local Trust Committee meetings. We also suggest the LCC work with the CRD Director in establishing overall CRD project priorities, based on the needs of the various commissions, CRD services, and public priorities. Each LCC member should be assigned to oversee one or more commissions to ensure that recommendations from commissions are heard and acted upon.

The CRD Board would create the LCC through the of passing two bylaws. An Establishment bylaw would establish the LCC—setting out its structure and rules of operation. A separate delegation bylaw would set out the authority and responsibilities delegated to the LCC. Ideally, this process would be championed by the CRD Director, and would be negotiated with CRD senior management prior to approval by the CRD Board. This process would start out with an initial study of the implications of creating an LCC, followed by a referendum on SSI.

The Province contributes \$5,000 per year toward the annual operating costs of each of the five existing LCCs in BC. These are much smaller communities than Salt Spring. We recommend that the Province be asked to significantly scale up its grant for a Salt Spring LCC in view of our much greater population. The appropriate amount for this provincial grant might depend on the extent of powers delegated to the SSI LCC by the CRD Board.

## **APPENDIX D Non-Profit Delivery of CRD “Contribution Services”**

“Contribution Services” describes services that are financially supported by the CRD, but delivered by an external agency such as a non-profit society, rather than by the CRD itself. Typically, the CRD financial contribution covers only a portion of the non-profit’s total budget. The CRD acknowledges that the contribution services model is more arms-length than direct administration by CRD staff or by a CRD commission. This allows contribution service agencies more autonomy over their own governance.

Terms of such relationships are set out in contracts between the CRD and the non-profit agencies. Although the details can vary significantly from one contract to another, the contracts are designed to ensure adequate levels of accountability and transparency in the use of public funds. The contracts also contain provisions to address the important issue of liability. Recipient agencies may be required to purchase insurance coverage to levels specified by the CRD - although some insurance may be provided through the CRD itself. Funds contributed by the CRD may be applied to insurance costs.

Two very informative examples of contribution services within the CRD include the Salt Spring Island Public Library and Pender Islands Fire-Rescue. More detail will be provided on the latter service since it is less familiar to Salt Spring residents.

**The Salt Spring Island Public Library Association** has a 10-year lease agreement that allows the Association to operate the library within a building owned by the CRD. The rent is \$10/year. The Association is responsible for all operating costs and must maintain the building according to a maintenance plan approved by the CRD. Any alterations or sub-lets require CRD approval.

The lease agreement requires the Association to obtain insurance coverage for general liability, tenant liability, and all-risk (fire, earthquake, etc.). If the Association chooses, it can obtain the all-risk insurance through the CRD’s blanket insurance. The Association indemnifies the CRD against any claims. The CRD has the right to inspect the premises on 24 hours notice. If the Association defaults on the terms of the lease, the CRD can cancel the lease and take possession of the building. The lease also provides for a mediation process for dispute resolution.

The Library Association submits an annual request to the CRD for a contribution to support the library operation. In 2017, the CRD contributed \$340,570 to the Association for library operations. This was paid from a tax requisition previously approved by Salt Spring voters. The CRD contribution covered about 2/3 of the Library Association’s budget. The remaining revenues were provided by charitable donations, grants from the provincial and federal governments, investment income, and other revenues.

In addition, the library’s successful operation is crucially dependent on hours of labour contributed by many community volunteers. These hours are not factored into the association’s financial statements. Any Salt Spring resident who takes out a borrowing card automatically becomes a member of the Library Association and thus (except employees or those under age 18) eligible to vote in the selection of Association board members. The Salt Spring CRD Director is a member of the Association’s Board of Directors.

The total 2017 CRD tax requisition for the SSI Library Service was \$570,850 – which also covered almost \$200,000 in payments for principal and interest on the CRD-owned library building plus some additional minor allocations. Two thirds of the building’s construction costs were funded by federal-provincial infrastructure grants, with the remainder financed by borrowing through the Municipal Finance Authority.

**Pender Islands Fire-Rescue (PIFR)** is operated by the **Pender Islands Fire Protection Society (PIFPS)** – a non-profit registered charity. According to its website, PIFR has 4 full-time employees, 47 paid-on-call volunteer fire fighters and 51 volunteer support crew. It operates 3 fire halls, one training centre and meets the standards of a “full service fire department”. PIFR is managed by a Fire Chief who is an employee of and accountable to the Fire Protection Society. The Chief is responsible for day-to-day operations including human resources, customer service, and budget management.

The Pender Islands Fire Protection Society was created in 2004. Its membership is open to all residents or property owners on North or South Pender (\$2 fee per year). The PIFPS directors are elected annually by society

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members and board meetings are open to the public. The Southern Gulf Islands CRD Director is also a member of the PIFPS board. The society's board appoints the Fire Chief and other officers and is responsible for oversight of PIFR, longer term direction, and planning for PIFR services. The PIFPS Board also manages the contractual relationship with the CRD.

In 2017, the CRD requisitioned \$850,310 from property owners on North and South Pender Islands for the fire protection and emergency response service. Of this, \$687,060 was paid as a contribution to PIFPS. The CRD owns the buildings, land, fire trucks and other apparatus used by PIFR, except for assets purchased out of PIFPS' own funds or provided by other organizations.

The CRD-PIFPS contract grants the Society a licence to occupy and use designated CRD-owned buildings, properties, and equipment. To ensure taxpayer resources are protected, PIFPS must:

- Provide CRD access to all financial records,
- obtain CRD approval in writing for any site plans, working drawings, specifications etc.,
- obtain relevant CRD building permits,
- maintain any structures and fire equipment to standards acceptable to the CRD,
- notify the CRD of any release of contaminants and remediate to the CRD's satisfaction,
- provide the CRD with PIFPS's up-to-date operational guidelines,
- provide the CRD with the PIFPS annual report, minutes of general meetings, and financial statements (the latter being in a form approved by the CRD),
- keep funds received from the CRD separate from other PIFPS funds in the PIFPS books,
- provide an annual report of the estimated replacement cost of all fire equipment,
- submit an annual budget for CRD approval for the performance of contracted services,
- report to the CRD any revenues generated using CRD-owned facilities,
- not approve any expenditures of CRD funds unless provided for in the CRD-approved budget,
- request instalment payments from the CRD during the year,
- return to the CRD any annual operating funds not spent by year end (for transfer to a reserve fund),
- follow purchasing processes approved by the CRD – which includes approval by the CRD of suppliers for purchases over \$200,000.

In addition, the CRD can terminate the agreement on 90 days notice if the PIFPS defaults on any terms of the contract or if the CRD decides to create a fire commission for the service area. In the event of contract termination, the CRD would take possession of all assets that have been purchased with CRD funds.

An independent operational and budget review conducted by FireWise Consulting in 2012 concluded that PIFR provides excellent value to the community for the taxes paid and that PIFPS provides excellent oversight to PIFR. This review also noted that the CRD has been innovative in providing liability insurance for an inherently high risk service.

The CRD-PIFPS contract provides that the Society's volunteer firefighters and support crew are indemnified under the CRD's Municipal Officials Indemnification Bylaw and the applicable CRD insurance policy, and that employees, directors and officers of the Society are covered by an insurance policy maintained at the cost of the CRD. The contract further states that the CRD shall indemnify the Society's Fire Chief, Deputy Fire Chief, Officers, volunteers, employees, directors and officers of the Society from all liabilities, losses, and claims arising out of any claim in connection with the performance of the contracted services - except in the case of specified categories of misconduct.

### **Conclusions**

It is apparent from the above examples that the CRD has been very flexible and creative in finding solutions to concerns regarding potential liabilities associated with contribution services delivered by non-profits societies and associations.

The CRD has also built in safeguards to ensure accountability and transparency in the use of public funds. Society boards of directors made up of community members and in some cases the CRD electoral area director also provide oversight that is accountable to society members. Provincial legislation and society bylaws also impose a degree of accountability and transparency.

## Improving CRD Service Delivery on Salt Spring Island, BC: options for positive change

Existing contribution services provide a range of models that could be used to expand service delivery by non-profits on Salt Spring.

### **Potential expansion of non-profit service delivery**

The CRD's *New Service Request Toolkit* sets out the procedure for establishing a new CRD service – including contribution services. Key requirements that must be met are:

- A purpose that aligns with the CRD's mandate;
- A service area that specifies who will benefit from and pay for the service;
- Demonstrated financial viability of the service's ability to cover all direct and overhead costs;
- Legislative authority for the service;
- Community support.

The Toolkit is provided on the CRD website at:

<https://www.crd.bc.ca/docs/default-source/crd-document-library/committeedocuments/financeandcorporateservicescommittee/20130000/item-5-appendix-a-new-service-request-toolkitR.pdf?sfvrsn=0>

An excellent example of the application of this toolkit is provided by the current proposal to establish a new contribution service to support the Saturna Island Medical Clinic operated by the Saturna Community Club.

Supporting documents are available at: [https://www.crd.bc.ca/docs/default-source/crd-document-library/committeedocuments/electoralareaservicescommittee/20180314/2018-03-14agendapkg.pdf?sfvrsn=c61c16ca\\_2](https://www.crd.bc.ca/docs/default-source/crd-document-library/committeedocuments/electoralareaservicescommittee/20180314/2018-03-14agendapkg.pdf?sfvrsn=c61c16ca_2)



## **APPENDIX E Case studies of successful CRD collaborations**

### **1. Successful collaborations: Partners Creating Pathways**

#### **Construction of Pathways on Salt Spring Island through a Partnership between CRD and Community Groups**

##### **Introduction**

A community survey in 1991 by the Capital Regional District (CRD) Parks and Recreation Commission (PARC) demonstrated overwhelmingly support for bike and hiking paths. PARC also convened two separate community task forces, both of which proposed an off-road pathway network in the periphery of Ganges. In response, then CRD Director Gary Holman created the CRD Transportation Commission to facilitate construction of a Ganges Village Pathway Network (GVPN) and provide a community bus service.

##### **Partners Creating Pathways (PCP)**

In response, Island Pathways, a registered non-profit organization dedicated to promoting and building safe active transportation options, formed a committee called Partners Creating Pathways (PCP). PCP, with all its partners, has now successfully completed the GVPN and realized its vision of taking pedestrians, cyclists and mobility scooters off the road and onto a network of safe off-road pathways.

The success of this project is due to the collaborative nature of the PCP partnership with each partner contributing elements essential to its success. The partners are: the CRD, the Salt Spring Island Transportation Commission (SSITC), Island Pathways (IP) working with the provincial Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MoTI).

##### **The “Critical Path”**

In 2011, the chair of the SSITC negotiated a “Critical Path” agreement to guide the building of pathways on Salt Spring. The CRD General Manager, the CRD Senior Manager for Salt Spring, the CRD Transportation Manager for SSI, the MoTI District Development Technician, the CRD Regional Director, the Chair of Island Pathways, the Chair of Partners Creating Pathways, and the SSITC all signed off on and endorsed the Critical Path.

The purpose of the document was:

- to guide the building of pathways on MoTI right-of-way
- to allow all key parties involved, namely CRD, PCP, IP, the SSITC and MoTI to fully appreciate who is responsible for what; and thereby
- to facilitate collaboration while expediting the process.

##### **Ongoing Collaboration**

Subsequent collaboration between the partners since 2011 has been faithfully guided by the Critical Path. The agreed division of labour meant that the SSITC helps to decide on projects and to fund them. As pathways are community amenities, the CRD is responsible for all liability and maintenance issues and handle the following (not a complete list):

- Contract administration,
- MoTI permit applications,
- Approval of design plans,
- Tendering the projects, contractor selection and contract signature.
- Final approval of work done by the contractor.

Island Pathways takes responsibility for:

- Raising some of the funds
- Project route surveys
- Preparing grant applications and final reports to funders
- Pathway designs
- Liaison with neighbours and all related stakeholders
- Drafting MoTI permit applications
- Construction drawings for tendering
- Volunteer project management during construction
- Kiosk and bench construction and installation
- Safety signage supply and installation
- Landscaping

## Improving CRD Service Delivery on Salt Spring Island, BC: options for positive change

Role of the SSITC: Each year, PCP requests SSITC endorsement of a pathway project for the following year and seeks a funding allocation from the SSITC transportation tax requisition.

### **The PCP Track Record**

The collaborative approach adopted by all Partners Creating Pathways members has been critical to the success of the timely completion of the GVPN. The Driftwood said *“One of the best facets of the network is that very little of the funding has come from local taxpayers. IP [Island Pathways] seems to have the magic touch when it comes to getting grants and leveraging both cooperation and funds from other agencies. As well, use of volunteer expertise and labour has minimized costs”*.

### **Conclusion**

This partnership has worked exceptionally well because it has been a true collaboration where each partner has contributed separate and essential tasks in the creation of at least one new pathway project annually for ten years. The partnership has saved the community enormous amounts of money and more importantly has taken pedestrians, cyclists and mobility scooter users off the road and put them on safe pathways...maybe saving lives.

## **2. Successful CRD collaborations: Salt Spring Transit Case Study**

The Salt Spring Island Transportation Commission (SSITC) serves in an advisory role to the CRD and to BC Transit on matters related to the transit service and to transportation related community needs and projects. The SSITC and Salt Spring Transit are unique in rural BC.

In 2003, CRD Director Gary Holman obtained funding for a Feasibility Study to establish a Salt Spring public transit system. The study was submitted to BC Transit and the CRD in September 2004. In 2007, a successful application was made to the federal government’s Public Transit Infrastructure Program which funded a fleet of two minibuses to allow for the launching of SS Transit.

SSI Transit is a "stand-alone" system. It is not part of the CRD regional transit system. If SS Transit was part of the regional system, every household on SSI would pay the same tax rate as the rest of the region (about \$120 per household in 2007) with no guarantee that SSI would receive the same level of service. In order to establish our own basic stand alone system, with a per household cost of about \$12 per year initially, CRD Director Holman obtained approval from both the CRD Board and the Greater Victoria Transit Commission to opt out of the regional system.

Local taxpayer approval for the establishment of SSI Transit was obtained through the Alternative Approval Process rather than by referendum. Perhaps local taxpayers recognized that they were getting a good deal with roughly 50% provincial funding and two “free” buses. Less than 2% of registered voters signed the petition. SSI Transit began operations in January 2008.

Ridership numbers climbed rapidly in the first years of service and more than doubled initial estimates. While the feasibility study assumed 16,000 riders in year one, 45,000 passengers climbed on board. SSI Transit and its operator Ineke de Jong of Ganges Faerie Minishuttle received a Canadian Urban Transit Association award for the best startup of a transit service in a Canadian rural area.

In 2013, with support from CRD Director Garth Hendren, the Alternative Approval Process was used again to approve an increase of the SSITC annual transit requisition from \$80,000/year to a maximum drawdown of \$245,000. Ridership continued to climb and by 2017 exceeded 100,000 rides a year.

Former SSITC Chair Donald McLennan gave much of the credit to BC Transit’s Senior Regional Transit Manager Myrna Moore for her hands-on approach to the oversight of the bus system. *“Ms Moore attends several SSITC meetings each year; she is available, collaborative, consultative and sharing with information.”* SS Transit earned 246% more revenue compared to other community transit systems in BC in 2016-17 and realized operating cost recovery of 43.8% compared to a tier average of 15.7%. *“It is phenomenal—absolutely phenomenal.”* according to Myrna Moore. (Driftwood December 6, 2017)

## APPENDIX F Case studies of CRD projects experiencing problems

### 1. North Ganges Transportation Plan

The Salt Spring Island Transportation Commission (SSITC) serves in an advisory role to the CRD and to BC Transit on matters related to the transit service and to transportation related community needs and projects. The SSITC and Salt Spring Transit are unique in rural BC. As described in Appendix E, SS Transit and Partners Creating Pathways are community success stories, but the SSITC has experienced substantial delays in construction of some planned transportation infrastructure.

The North Ganges Transportation Plan (NGTP) aspect of the transportation file has had mixed results. The NGTP was initiated in response to community outcry after the death of a pedestrian on Lower Ganges Rd in 2004 and a student struck by a car on Rainbow Road. There were no sidewalks or bike lanes in either of these heavily-travelled locations. At the instigation of the CRD Director, gas tax funds were budgeted to enhance the safety of road users.

Consultants Richard James & Associates were engaged in 2007 to prepare a planning overview. In 2010, federal Community Works Program (gas tax) funds were allocated for a follow-up detailed engineering study by JE Anderson & Associates (JEA). The provincial Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MoTI) approved Phase One in September 2011. Construction on Lower Ganges Road was completed in 2013. The project, consisting of a sidewalk, bike lane, bus pullout and intersection improvements, cost \$1.2m of which \$200,000 was contributed by local taxpayers through the SSITC. MoTI contributed \$450,000. Federal gas tax funds covered the remainder.

In order to complete further phases of the plan, SSI residents approved by referendum in November 2014 \$1 million in additional taxpayer funding by increasing the annual SSITC transportation requisition from \$146,000 to \$396,000 over 2015-2018.

Projects funded by the 2014 tax referendum have been delayed since that time. Engineering plans were complete in 2014 when islanders approved the \$1 million tax increase for transportation infrastructure to finish the NGTP and improve safety on Ganges Hill. The Driftwood editorial of Nov 12, 2014 stated *“Making sure SSITC and the CRD stay on course to get the job done on time and on budget will be of paramount importance during the next four years.”*

The only progress on this plan has been a \$30,000 pathway fronting Gulf Islands Secondary School that was designed and managed by a SSI community volunteer organization, Partners Creating Pathways. The CRD Capital Plan 2018-2022 confirms \$1,806,000 has accumulated in the SSI Transportation Commission (SSITC) reserve fund since 2014 for these stalled projects.

The situation was exacerbated by a further unanticipated delay in April 2018 because the CRD had neglected to consider archaeological requirements. The Driftwood reported (May 2, 2018): *“Commissioners voiced surprise the information was only coming to light now, when the project has been in the works for years. Conceptual designs for the NGTP were first submitted by consultants JE Anderson ... in 2010.”* Commissioner Nigel Denyer was quoted in the same article: *“It’s been four years since we went to referendum to get funding for this project and nothing much has happened in that four years.”*

According to former SSITC Chair Donald McLennan, delays executing the NGTP are especially alarming as grant opportunities were lost. In 2014, CRD received \$60,000 grant support for the NGTP from Bike BC. McLennan commented *“Since the NGTP funds remain unspent, CRD was ineligible to participate in the 2017-18 Bike BC grant program which offers \$1 million in infrastructure funding for NGTP-type projects”*.

## **APPENDIX F Case studies of CRD projects experiencing problems (cont)**

### **2. Maliview Sewage Treatment Plant and Outfall**

*based on interviews with Sharon Bywater, Maliview Sewer Local Services Commissioner*

The Capital Regional District (CRD) Maliview Sewer Local Services Commission serves the Maliview neighbourhood, a community of modest, affordable homes occupied mostly by working families and blue collar retirees. There are only 101 households connected to and paying for the system, which is managed and operated by the CRD.

In June 2004, the Sewer Commission approved the purchase of a new wastewater treatment plant for their sewer system. This was needed because the original plant, installed by the developer, did not meet the new provincial requirements for effluent quality and was approaching the end of its lifespan. The Maliview Sewer Service received a grant to help defray the costs of the new plant.

In November of 2005, the commission was notified that the new plant had been completed and that the inflows were double that of flows recorded at the prior plant. The CRD confirmed to the commission that the design of the new plant had been based on inaccurate data from a faulty meter in the old plant. In April 2006, the commission was told that winter inflow from non-sewage sources (rain and groundwater) had occasionally been six times the plant's design and that the plant was drastically undersized.

The unanticipated flow created a number of problems and a series of unexpected expenses. The treatment standard that was specified for the plant was based on a flow of 50 cubic meters per day or less. Since the flow was above that, a stricter standard would apply. To address the issue, CRD spent approximately \$85,000 of ratepayer funds building additions to make the undersized plant meet permit requirements and the needs of the community. This work did not fully address the problem. CRD staff tried to find the source of the non-sewage inflow. Residents were contacted regarding repairs and were asked to disconnect sump pumps. But flows were not reduced substantially.

In 2005 the commission had to increase the user fee by \$200 a year to help pay for the expenses incurred. In March of 2007, CRD staff reported that the extra installed equipment would raise operating costs for disposal of additional waste (sludge) and rates would have to be increased again. In May it was determined that the reserve fund had been exhausted and rates would have to be raised even more to try to replenish it.

By 2016 user fees were \$1,163.28 a year. The average consumption fee at that time was \$301 which meant that in 2016 the average ratepayer was paying \$1,464.28 a year for sewage treatment. In 2016 alone emergency repair costs were \$16,000. Many of these users were also paying increasing costs for water service.

The Maliview sewer system has been caught in a breakdown repair cycle since the new plant was installed. Despite steady user fee increases, the creation of a consumption fee, and cost savings measures, the service has been unable to build reserve funds.

An additional problem is that in 2014 the outfall structure had failed, resulting in a spill on the beach and beach closure. A temporary solution was proposed at a cost of \$135,000 but to this date, this work has not been completed. Commissioners fear that if another spill occurs, the ratepayers could incur clean-up costs in addition to repair costs.

Problems with the high rate of inflow to the plant continue, and commissioners think the inflow rates have resulted in many breakdowns leading to expensive repairs and will possibly decrease the life of the plant itself. Either the CRD or its contractor made the mistake of basing the new plant's design on data from a flow meter in a plant over 30 years old yet, unless the CRD Director provides assistance from community works/gas tax funds or other sources, all the additional costs fall on the ratepayers. If costs keep increasing, some residents fear they will be unable to afford to pay and will be forced out of their homes. The community currently has neither the right plant nor the funds to build one.

In 2016, the CRD Director secured CRD Board approval of approximately \$195,000 in community works/gas tax funds for a temporary repair to the outfall structure and to undertake some repair of mains carrying sewage from homes to the plant in order to reduce inflow from groundwater. But as of this date, this work is still at the engineering stage. The community feels that since CRD is responsible for this problem, it should secure funding to provide the sewage treatment plant which the community needs.