



SOUTHERN GULF ISLANDS FORUM

Meeting Agenda for Friday, March 14, 2025 – 12:00pm-2:00pm

Attendees

Members (virtual):

1. Chair: Elizabeth May, MP (Saanich-Gulf Islands)
2. Rob Botterell, MLA (Saanich-Gulf Islands)
3. Rachel Hooton, Referrals Coordinator, Land & Membership (STÁUTW_ (Tsawout) First Nation)
4. Paul Brent, CRD Director (Southern Gulf Islands)
5. Laura Patrick, Islands Trustee (Salt Spring), Chair of Islands Trust Council
6. David Maude, Islands Trustee (Mayne Island), Vice-Chair of Islands Trust Council, Chair of Saturna and Pender Local Trust Committees
7. Timothy Peterson, Islands Trustee (Lasqueti Island), Vice-Chair of Islands Trust Council, Chair of Salt Spring and Galiano Local Trust Committees
8. Tobi Elliot, Islands Trustee (Gabriola Island), Vice-Chair of Islands Trust Council
9. Deb Morrison, Islands Trustee
10. Mairead Boland, Islands Trust
11. Ned Taylor, Government Program Manager, WSÁNEĆ Leadership Council

Support Staff (virtual):

12. Patricia Pearson (Office of Rob Botterell, MLA)
13. Aysha Emmerson (Office of Elizabeth May, MP)
14. Clare Frater (Islands Trust Secretariat)
15. Cha keen na kwaut's (Otter.Ai) Notetaker

Welcome

MLA Botterell welcomed virtual attendees, offering a land acknowledgement. Attendees congratulated Laura Patrick on her recent nomination as Chair of Islands Trust Council! New participants introduced themselves and the agreed-upon agenda was outlined:

1. Updates – Recent Letters and January Follow-Up
2. Arising Matters from Local Representatives
3. Discussion – Local Response to Shifting U.S.-Canada Relationship and Tariffs
4. Update – SGI Forum Budget and Coordination
5. Summary of Action Items and Next Steps

Updates – Recent Letters and January Follow-Up

Summary: MP May summarized the recent letters sent to Minister, following up from the January 2025 Forum. These letters included a follow up letter to the Minister of Transport and letter to the Minister of Heritage related to Beaver Point. An email to local Indigenous leaders was also sent regarding interest/guidance in the formation of an Indigenous-led Port Authority.

Key discussion points are as follows.

Letters to Minister (MP May)

- “Sharply worded” Letter to Minister of Transport (prev. Anita Anand) has been sent.
- New Cabinet; Freeland is Minister of Transport.
- Anand has decided to run again; after initially saying she would not seek re-election.
- *Request/reminder* from Trustee Morrison: one of the goals of creating the Forum is to leverage each other as advocates in shared work. In any future meetings with the Minister of Transport, request for inclusion (invite other Forum members where possible).

Letter from Islands Trust

- Islands Trust penned and has circulated amongst the SGI Forum a letter regarding the expansion of the Wrecked, Abandoned or Hazardous Vessels Act program in the Islands Trust Area.

Arising Matters from Local Representatives

Summary: Numerous matters were raised by representatives, spanning the BC government’s Climate Action Secretariat, CMHC, upcoming federal election and Cabinet changes, helicopters, gooey duct harvesting approval, tiny homes, CRD’s budget, WLC’s expanding collaborations with local governments, and early action re an Indigenous COP delegation.

Key discussion points are as follows.

BC Legislature Updates (Rob)

- Good and productive first months in the Legislature! Working hard alongside the Green MLA regarding the response to the tariffs, stressing the need for action.
- Legislature is exploring promise of Community Health Centres and making headway.
- Rob is in conversation with Climate Action Secretariat, which was required to cancel new positions, given the provincial hiring freeze. The Secretariat’s capacity is minuscule compared to what is needed for implanting its mandate.

CMHC Request for Support and CRD (Paul Brent)

- Request for support from CMHC; CRD needs to get to someone to say that “when we build on islands, things tend to get very expensive,” particularly since we use septic systems rather than city water, as just one example.
- CMHC has that if they had known the building would be so expensive, they would not have supported it. CRD hopes to talk some sense into people in Ottawa: can that pitch be made directly by Elizabeth?

- **Action Item:** CRD to follow up with Elizabeth and Aysha with specific/detailed documentation. Email and we will contact the Minister.

Upcoming Federal Election (MP May)

- Writ is likely to drop on March 23, 2025, with E-day April 28 or May 5. For any lingering Letters to Minister, must get them to Minister's by the end of next week.
- Once writ drops, will still be able to attend local meetings in her capacity as MP but loses some access to the federal bureaucracy. Can still try passing notes to friends in parliament. However, government becomes a "caretaker government."

Minister Change – Fisheries and Oceans (Tim Peterson)

- Joanne Thomson is the new Minister for Fisheries and Oceans; need to raise with Joanne the intersection of transport and DRO green issues. All marine matters should be sent to both Transport and FAO.

North Pender Helicopters (Deb Morrison)

- North Pender is still facing a helicopter problem, aerodrome issue.
- **Action Item:** Deb will send a letter about these issues to Elizabeth and Aysha, which can then be conveyed to Chrystia Freeland, ideally before writ drops.

Goosey Duct Harvesting Approval (Tobi Elliot)

- Recently received surprising notice that a goosey duct harvesting company has been approved for a 30-year tenure, rezoning lands that had not been approved for rezoning. Trust is confused; project is of "great local concern" and the process amounts to a "strange piece of business."
- Goosey Duct harvesting project was approved, despite Thetis' Local Trust Committee turning down the company's application to rezone pretty harbour for aquaculture twice. It seems like LTC was overridden, potentially First Nations, too.
- Extensive First Nations consultation and engagement was conducted. Previously the Penelakut had been against the rezoning, though now reports say the First Nations had no concerns. Trustees are wondering if the Penelakut are indeed in support and/or why the Ministry would approve the project against the LTC's non-support.
- No specific action is being requested, but it is important for SGI members to become and remain aware of this issue. Is this a trend wherein—to prioritize local food production—the province will be moving into new areas without consent/support of LTC? What is the expected environmental impact?
- *Questions/comments by Rachel Hooton: Where is this? Who was consulted? Mostly reserve lands? Confirmation needed.*

Tiny Homes Updates (Mairead Boland, Tobi Elliot, Paul Brent)

- March 13, driven by Tobi, Trustees attended a Tiny Homes on Wheels workshop in Nanaimo, which exceeded the expectations of all those involved.
- Workshop convened technical people from Islands Trust and CRD as well as other interested parties. Did not include community engagement at this stage.
- Very early step, essentially several planners exploring barriers with current legislation and how we can move forward with these homes, i.e. what can be done to legalize housing innovations?
- New ideas raised, connections formed, and people left feeling committed to staying in touch. Report will be shared in a couple of weeks.

- Trust is focused on investigating how Tiny Homes on Wheels can be implemented in Trust areas as part of supporting diverse forms of housing. There will be a steering committee of political leaders, including Laura Patrick and Paul Brent. AVICC convention presentation in April.
- *Question/comments by Mairead Boland:* This workshop was inspiring. Could we do something similar for water regulation to explore practical avenues for rezoning?

CRD Budget, Biodiversity, Tiny Homes (Paul Brent)

- CRD passed its budget on Wednesday. Of interest to this Forum especially, is the establishment of a “biodiversity service” examining biodiversity protections and promotion. CRD will also be setting up a “Farmlands Access” service, which aims to lease some parks’ agricultural land to small/young farmers, creating opportunity.
- One of the NGOs that CRD supports is trying to establish a pilot Tiny Homes project in tandem with the Penelakut who may possess land on Galiano that would be a perfect tiny homes community.
- CRD is discussing how to buy Canadian (Federation of Canadian Municipalities is trying to coordinate a “buy Canadian project”).

Additional Federal Updates (MP May)

- Party Leaders have been meeting re the response to U.S. Tariffs; most recently a February 2nd Zoom meeting. Elizabeth is striving to push Carney to ensure the official opposition works together as well as the Premiers. Collaboration is key.
 - It is much better if we can represent all Canadian people, saying “we are united and will not back down.” This was Elizabeth’s message when we travelled to Washington, DC for Trump’s National Prayer Breakfast. Here, Elizabeth also met with staffers, especially Republican ones, trying to rally support for Canada.
 - Andrew Coin, on March 1st, had some striking words: “The U.S. handed the nuclear codes to a madman.” We are seeing cronyism of Trump’s oligarch buddies who receive special access, including to U.S. citizens’ private information.
 - Environmental Racism Bill by Elizabeth was inspired by the EPA’s approach. However, the EPA’s environmental racism protections have been slashed. There is so much whiplash it is challenging to keep up with it.
- Optimistic note: We can find inspiration in this moment to reimagine how we function as a country. For example, dismantling interprovincial trade barriers (to a net benefit of 200-300 billion in annual GDP), establishing a cross-Canada electricity grid.
- SMEs are struggling especially.
 - All government procurement should be Canadian; tackling food waste (30% of food in Canada) can promote higher proportion of Canadian production/consumption.
 - Strategic reserves could be established for all raw resources. Similar to our reserve for maple syrup and executed using the same spending trick used by Bill Morneau to establish the Kinder Morgan Pipeline (i.e. a “non-budgetary transaction” / asset transfer). Strategic reserves of lumber, for example, could be used to build affordable public housing (government would not take any profit). These strategic reserves would ensure that Canadian industries continue to be paid, while Indigenous engagement on who controls strategic reserves and when/where they are used can advance reconciliation.

- **Action Item:** Send Elizabeth any ideas for combatting the tariff threat and promoting economic cooperation within Canada.

WSÁNEĆ Leadership Council Updates (Ned Taylor)

- Through increased capacity in local govt program, WLC is expanding collaboration with local governments operating on WLC land
 - Working with the district of Saanich
 - Approved an MOU with the CRD and looking to build new MOUs, which cover priority topics for governance, such as:
 - Cover priority topics for governance
 - Protection of ancestral sites
 - Environmental protection
 - Harvesting
 - Cultural learning opportunities
 - Art, placenames, education
 - **Action Item:** Deb Morrison suggestion for Ned/Tsawout to pursue international collaborations, including for attendance and participation at COP. Need to put in bid for COP participation with provincial government with ample time. Last year was too late and process was hard to navigate. What kinds of local efforts can we take to UNFCCC? What money can be mobilized towards place-based Indigenous learning efforts internationally?
 - [Elizabeth will also be going to COP; Marine La Silva, this year's President, is a friend. Grew up in the Amazon and has worked extensively on Indigenous rights in Amazonia and human rights/justice in protecting the rainforest. Marine is ideal for this role].

Discussion – Local Response to Shifting U.S.-Canada Relationship and Tariffs

Summary: Background and preparatory information were shared, and a unified approach discussed, for the upcoming meeting with U.S. counterparts spurred by tariffs. How can we mitigate damages on both sides of the border and continue acting on shared priorities?

Key discussion points are as follows.

Update by Laura Patrick

- Clare, Aysha, Patricia as well as staff of offices from state/congresspeople's office from San Juan Islands met to discuss a potential meeting bringing together leadership on both sides of Canada-U.S. border.
- Meeting suggestion has come from the U.S. counterparts—they are very upset.
- March 17, 2025, meeting has been scheduled, which will be chaired by Victoria Compton and Laura. Meeting will be focused on San Juan / Southern Gulf Islands. Goal is to reaffirm relationships, and how important relationships are to our shared environment. This meeting will be private, no press.
- Tentative agenda:
 - Elizabeth will set the tone with introductory remarks
 - Rep Larsen will provide remarks before leaving to another obligation

- o Laura Patrick will review the historic relationship
- o Dr. Troutman will discuss the impact of tariffs
- o Open discussion regarding potential for cooperation and leadership on shared priorities.
- o Determine action items, such as a potential joint letter / public statement.
- So that numbers are relatively balanced between Canadian / American / First Nations attendees, only one Trustee per Island will attend. Laura has been in touch on this front.
- **Action item:** *Send Aysha/Laura list of attendees (Tsawout/WLC, CRD, Trustees). Aysha will circulate a calendar invitation and agenda.*

Open Discussion

- No disagreements were voiced about the proposed approach; importance of the meeting affirmed by the group. Many years in the making to convene U.S. counterparts, hopefully the start of an ongoing relationship.
- **Action item:** *Patricia will reach out to Adam Olsen about WSÁNEĆ interest in renewing the ferry service to San Juan Islands, and how this could be pursued.*

Update – SGI Forum Budget and Coordination (Clare)

Summary: Administrative discussion and approvals for continued work of SGI Forum.

- Staffing changes at Islands Trust. Chloe Straw will be starting on the 17th as the new Program Coordinator and will be main SGI Forum contact for Trust moving forward.
- Very little of the budget from last year was used. Website renewal invoice \$350/year. Clare: Do we have approval to use the budget renew the website? Attendees: Unanimous yes.
- In addition to website, SGI Forum budget can be used for a notetakers/coordinator, refreshments for in-person meetings, event space, etc.
- **Action Item:** *Send Clare any suggested updates and improvements to the SGI Forum website. Aysha will send a letter to Islands Trust requesting a \$3,000 budget for this coming year—to be circulated for approval alongside Minutes. This letter will be based on the one by Adam Olsen. Aysha/Chloe will meet to discuss Forum coordination and share of responsibilities.*

Summary of Action Items and Next Steps

- *In meetings with Ministers, include members of the Forum whenever possible.*
- *Act early on COP delegation!*
- *Explore WSÁNEĆ interest in renewing the ferry service to San Juan Islands.*
- *Share ideas re combatting the tariff threat and strengthening Canada's sovereign economy.*
- *Send Clare suggested updates and improvements to the SGI Forum website.*
- *Approve/send request for new funding from Island Trust (\$3,000 budget).*
- *Send any letters/requests to Minister to Elizabeth before the writ drops.*

For follow up inquiries regarding the minutes, please contact MP May's office at Elizabeth.May.C1@parl.gc.ca