



SOUTHERN GULF ISLANDS FORUM

Meeting Minutes for Thursday July 3, 2025 – 9:00am-10:30am

Attendees

Members (in-person):

1. Chair: Rob Botterell, MLA (Saanich North and the Islands)
2. Elizabeth May, MP (Saanich-Gulf Islands)
3. Laura Patrick, Islands Trustee (Salt Spring Island), Chair of Islands Trust Council
4. David Maude, Islands Trustee (Mayne Island), Vice-Chair of Islands Trust Council, Chair of Saturna and Pender Local Trust Committees
5. Liam Edwards, Chief Administrative Officer (Town of Sidney)

Members (virtual):

6. Dag Falck, Islands Trustee (South Pender Island)
7. Timothy Peterson, Islands Trustee (Lasqueti Island), Vice-Chair of Islands Trust Council, Chair of Salt Spring and Galiano Local Trust Committees
8. Paul Brent, CRD Director (Southern Gulf Islands)
9. Mairead Boland, Islands Trustee (Saturna Island)
10. Deb Morrison, Island Trustee (North Pender, Saturna Island)

Support Staff (in-person):

1. Aysha Emmerson (Office of Elizabeth May, MP)
2. Joanna Banister (Office of Elizabeth May, MP)
3. Rebecca Wolf Gage (Office of Elizabeth May, MP)
4. Julie Luna (Office of Rob Botterell, MLA)

Meeting Opening

MLA Botterell welcomed members, both in the room and online, offering a land acknowledgement. Participants introduced themselves. MLA Botterell overviewed the agenda; ‘discussion of the fall intergovernmental meeting’ was added.

Updates from Elected Representatives

1. Provincial Update from MLA Botterell

- MLA Botterell will be serving on British Columbia's All-Party Special Committee on Democratic and Electoral Reform this summer.
- The Committee is inviting public input on issues such as democratic engagement, voter participation, and how MLAs are elected.
- Written submissions are due July 25, 2025 (under 2000 words).
- Hearings in Victoria will take place July 14-18 in the Douglas Fir Committee Room (Room 226).

2. Federal update (elections, etc.) from MP May

- MP May continues to advocate for reviving C-33, which would help to increase control of anchorages in the Salish Sea, and reduce shipping through banning exports of thermal coal. She is working to schedule a meeting with the New Minister of Transport (Chrystia Freeland) on this matter.
- There are no regulations for the Vessel Remediation Fund, which would support the removal of derelict vessels. The bill creating the fund passed nearly two years ago and MP May is pressing Chrystia Freeland to take action to create these regulations.
- Environment and Climate Change Canada announced the entire class of PFAS ("forever chemicals") will now be listed as toxic substances. These new regulations don't go as far as they could, excluding fluoropolymers, such as the brand name Teflon due to a "different risk profile."

3. Island Trust updates – Trustees

- Trustee Patrick → The Salt Spring OCP project now has a dedicated team in place.
 - New draft Islands Trust Policy Statement is expected by the end of July.
- Trustee Falk → South Pender Bylaw 129 (related to housing) has received first reading.
- Trustee Peterson → Galiano Island rezonings are being pursued. Penelakut Drive will undergo rezoning within this term.
- Trustee Boland → Saturna and other Gulf Islands hope to find a manner by which small properties may install composting toilets. Composting toilets are linked to broader biosolids management issues; the design and filing costs are equivalent to those for large septic systems. A key barrier is the cost of filing and permitting, not the installation itself.
 - Proposed a fund to assist with filing and permitting costs for composting toilets and water systems. Permitting authority currently lies with Island Health.
- Trustee Morrison → Residents need intergovernmental waivers or supports for individuals unable to afford green upgrades, emphasizing a holistic approach to climate

policy. Separately, proposed that, to focus discussion on Island and First Nations priorities, the order of updates is reversed in future Forum meetings.

4. CRD and Town of Sidney

- Director Brent → A new CRD plant will move forward to convert biosolids into “biochar” at Harland Landfill. Australian technology; first of its kind in Canada.
- CAO Edwards → Sidney residents are frustrated with recent BC legislative amendments tying housing to development financing. The City of Sidney has requested a meeting with the Minister of Housing to address this concern.

Action Item - *MLA Botterell proposed hosting a separate call with SGI Forum members attending UBCM to develop a unified approach in presenting concerns to the province, specifically to discuss downloading of provincial responsibilities onto local governments. MLA Botterell is suggesting Monday, September 8 and will arrange the meeting.*

Action item- *MLA Botterell proposed adding strategies to better improve Indigenous participation to SGI Forum Meetings as a unique agenda point for the September meeting.*

Action Item - *MLA Botterell proposed that anyone interested in funding to cover cost of applications or other innovative climate policies and incentives (composting toilet funding included) is best advised to make submission to CleanBC Review.*

Discussion – Housing Programs, Policies and Funding

Summary: Forum Members briefly discussed the local housing crisis. The Minister of Housing will be visiting Salt Spring Island later in July, and the MLA’s office announced a fall focus on affordable housing. The airport authority was underscored as a key player in housing discussions.

- As Salt Spring continues to face a housing crisis, the Minister of Housing is set to visit the island.
- In the fall, MLA Botterell will begin outreach to the Islands Trust and CRD to identify key areas to support affordable housing.
- MLA Botterell is engaging with the Salt Spring airport to explore affordable housing alongside industrial use.
- MP May has personally pressed the new Housing Minister, the Hon. Gregor Robertson to fund housing initiatives in Southern Gulf Islands.

Discussion – Road Conditions on SGI

Summary: Road quality and status was discussed, and road problems were noted on Pender Island. It was noted that under the BC government’s regulations, the Gulf Islands cannot be serviced with Vancouver Island public transport.

- Pender Island recently invested in road improvements.
- Saturna has experienced poor road conditions since the atmospheric rivers, with no funding for more than basic rehabilitation. Repair estimates are required prior to future discourse on the matter.
- Inclusion of the Southern Gulf Islands in the Southern Vancouver Island Transportation Plan is not approved by the BC government.

Action item - MLA Botterell's office will write a letter to the Minister to renew the request for inclusion of the Southern Gulf Islands in the transportation plan. Specifically, the road to Ganges experiences higher traffic than many other roads in the Gulf Islands and may require attention.

Discussion – Biosolids and PFAS

Summary: As mentioned in general updates, the CRD is beginning a new biosolids project, with the goal of creating green gas. The new initiative is considered somewhat economically risky but positions the region as a leader in innovation.

- The CRD is pioneering work on biosolids, in partnership with parties in Australia. These efforts aim to develop a revenue stream from biosolids.
- Methane from the landfill is to be converted into commercial natural gas (green gas). This green gas will be used to fuel biochar production.

Discussion - Intergovernmental Meeting

Summary: Meeting date is confirmed (save the date!). Laura Patrick, Aysha Emmerson, Patricia Pearson are directly involved in coordinating. More details re invitations and agenda forthcoming.

- MP May Constituency Coordinator, Aysha → Confirmed date: Friday, October 17th, 2025. Location: Mary Winspear Center.
 - Participants include elected officials and Indigenous leaders. Representatives from both the Gulf Islands and San Juan Islands will be in attendance.
 - Two central themes have been proposed: 1) Economic cooperation; and 2) environmental priorities for the bioregion.
 - The potential of a draft statement being developed/finalized through the meeting is under discussion.
- MLA Botterell → The Legislature has independently been working on a joint declaration with Washington State Ministers. This intended to demonstrate ongoing commitment to cross-border cooperation. There was an emphasis on collaboration independent of the Trump administration, a separate political will toward partnership. There will not be a draft agreement until the fall.

Discussion – Next steps on issues raised in updates

- Trustee Morrison will chair the meeting on September 4th, which will take place again at MLA Botterell's office. MP May's office will coordinate meeting minutes/soliciting agenda points with Trustee Morrison.
- The possibility of a presentation by the Saturna Island Marine Research Society (SIMRS) was proposed for September; however, it was determined this idea will not proceed, given the limited time allocated for meetings and the benefit of information-sharing between participating members in the Forum. There is always a lot to discuss.

Closing Remarks and Reflections

- It was proposed to meet for two hours at a time for future in-person meetings, rather than an hour and a half.

***Action Item:** Use the September 4, 2025, meeting as an opportunity to review the Forum's Terms of Reference, goals, structure, and priorities, given the longer timeframe pre-allocated for this meeting (9:00am-1:00pm).*

Confirmation of date and details of next meeting

The next SGI Forum meeting will be hybrid, held in-person over lunch at MLA Botterell's office, with the ability to join remotely on MS Teams.

DATE and TIME: September 4th, 2025, 9:00am-1:00pm.

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