



SOUTHERN GULF ISLANDS FORUM

Meeting Minutes for Thursday, September 4, 2025 – 9:00am-1:00pm

MLA Botterell Community Office
9828 Fourth Street
Sidney, BC V8L 2Z3

Attendees

Participants (virtual/in-person)

1. Deb Morrison, Islands Trustee (North Pender Island) – *Meeting Co-Chair*
2. Mairead Boland, Islands Trustee (Saturna Island) – *Meeting Co-Chair*
3. Paul Brent, CRD Director (Southern Gulf Islands)
4. Earl Rooke, SSI Local Community Commission Chair
5. Dag Falck, Islands Trustee (South Pender Island)
6. Bel Manson (Land Referrals Coordinator, STÁUTW_ (Tsawout) First Nation)
7. David Maude, Islands Trustee (Mayne Island), Vice-Chair of Islands Trust Council, Chair of Saturna and Pender Local Trust Committees
8. Elizabeth May, MP (Saanich-Gulf Islands)
9. Rob Botterell, MLA (Saanich North and the Islands)
10. Chloe Straw, Staff (Islands Trust)
11. Aysha Emmerson, Staff (Office of Elizabeth May, MP)

Meeting Opening (Chair, Trustee Boland)

Trustee Boland offered a welcome/land acknowledgement. Participants introduced themselves. The previously approved agenda was outlined.

Updates from Representatives

1. CRD Updates from Director Brent

- Waiting to hear whether Galiano will receive committee housing funds from the province. There was substantial subscription, with only about 1/4 of applications selected.
- Made a motion at CRD Hospitals Committee for Island Health to provide 100,000 in capital for Pender Islands Health Program.
 - Pender is remote and rural, with long travel times to receive medical support.
 - Urgent Care on Pender (at Pender Health Centre) has received nothing from Island Health to date. Hopefully, the Committee Rob is associated with will inquire.

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- Funding allocations by Island Health seem random, with no distinct policy or standard for the rural islands.
 - Rob → has gone directly to Josi Osborne about issues with rural islands and primary health. The change in policy to allow water taxis for physicians is a great improvement.
 - [Name not documented] → recommends adding Island Health as a distinct topic of focus for future meetings.
- Pender's Schooner Trail from Magic Lake is progressing. It will be much less expensive than Mayne Island trail, with lessons learned about how to do things cheaper. Trail will come in at or under budget.

2. SSI Local Community Commission Updates by Earl Rooke

- The SSI LCC is a relatively new government body. The goal is to expand local democracy within the community, improving opportunities for input.
- SSI LCC is very busy. They offer avenues for community advocacy, not just services. People come to the LCC with a wide range of issues, even those the LCC lacks authority over.
 - Deals with everything from noise/chicken bylaws to questions of harbour management.

3. Islands Trust Updates from Trustees

- Trustee Maude:
 - Islands Trust has completed first reading of the draft Islands Trust Policy Statement, which is a monumental achievement. The draft statement is now out for consultation. Feedback is limited so far; if people aren't saying anything, perhaps they may be happy?
 - Went from place of strong concern with the draft policy statement to a place of agreement. "We've done the best that we can do." Looks forward to it being done.
 - Flagging lots of community and Indigenous concerns over Thetis Island file.
 - Mayne Island is trying to train cyclists to use the CRD Trail. People often refuse to use it; people on bikes get hit. Very dangerous. Working with Ministry and CRD to get some more prominent signage for bike paths.
- Trustee Boland:
 - Echoes that Islands Trusts draft Policy Statement is the big thing on the agenda.
 - There will be a Saturna Island trust committee meeting in October.
 - Not as happy as David with the draft policy statement but respects the process. First reading has allowed for a clean copy.
- Chloe Straw:
 - Attending this Forum meeting on behalf of Clare Frater.
 - Fallow deer will be the focus of one of Islands Trust's Stewardship Education webinars this year. Some very experienced volunteers will be raising awareness amongst community members about what a longer-term management strategy could look like.
 - Islands Trust will share more information about its Stewardship Education Program..

4. Tsawout Updates from Bel Manson

- Thank you to MP May for the Charleigh Pollock letter to Minister.

5. Federal Update from MP May

- Response to Bel → It was important to situate Charleigh's case in the larger context of Big Pharma profiting off rare diseases.
- Had a productive meeting with Mark Boysen over the summer, who leads the North Salt Spring Waterworks District. Learned more from Mark about the SSI Community Commission.
 - Mark applied for a Canada Housing and Infrastructure Fund (CHIF) grant (\$6 million). It is for waterworks but would help allow for housing that has already been approved. No response yet from the Minister.
- Reminder to send any federal grant applications to our office (Elizabeth.May.C1@parl.gc.ca). Elizabeth will follow up with the Minister or write a letter in support. Currently trying to bug the Minister of Housing's staff about responding to the letters delivered in May.
- Cannot resist mentioning excellent Sidney Rotary Club meeting!
 - Speech by Doug Kobayashi, Mayor of Colwood, regarding health.
 - "Talk about someone who wants to disrupt Island Health."
 - Mayor Kobayashi sees Island Health as an obstacle to health care.
- There has been one month of parliament since mid-December. May 27, 2025, to June 20, 2025.
 - Twenty-five pieces of legislation died on order paper January 6, 2025.
 - Eight bills have been introduced under Carney.
 - One citizenship (C-3) bill; two routine funding measures.
 - Bill C-5 stands to significantly impact (ignore) environmental/Indigenous rights.
 - Carney has shown no interest in bringing back C-33, which was at the point of passage. The bill would have banned the export of thermal core from BC and Canada, dramatically decreasing the number of bulk carrier freighters in this area.
- Secured a meeting with the Minister of Transport regarding unregulated and excess vessels/buoys clogging navigation. Pushed Freeland hard on C-33 and, separately, wrote her about B.C. ferries' recent banning of non-operational EVs.
- Currently running (nine) community meetings across Saanich-Gulf Islands, attending fall fairs (SSI upcoming). Will attend Saturna's SIMRES picnic on September 19.

6. Provincial Updates from MLA Botterell

- Busy reading 1000 submissions to democratic and electoral reform committee, which will reconvene on September 15 to deliberate and deliver findings. Meeting with each member of the committee individually.
- Met with Paul and Gary re affordable housing and what happens with the four or five applications that go to B.C. housing.
- Minister Christine Boyle will be on SSI to tour housing crisis there. Group on SSI working to put together presentation and ask for the Minister. In terms of housing on the peninsula, will meet with the three peninsula mayors at UBCM.
- Established an advisory group of doctors and has written the Health Minister to lay out problems with primary health care on peninsula and the islands. Will meet with Josie Osborne to ensure concerns are incorporated.
- As Green Party House Leader, and the one responsible for Indigenous relations, attended a regular protest at Goldstream that Adam Olsen's father, Carl Olsen, has been leading on Tuesdays. Protest aims to stop the Goldstream expansion, which endangers the salmon habitat at a significant economic/environmental cost.

- Looking to bring the issue of food banks / a food hub into the legislature.
- Trying to spend 80% of his MLA office's time on constituency cases, adding value there while working on province-wide issues.
- On Sep 25, the Green Party of B.C. will have a new leader. They will give a keynote address at UBCM.

Discussion – Tiny Homes on Wheels and Roads on the Southern Gulf Islands

Summary: Discussion of the tiny homes on wheels program, including upcoming workshops, as well as the road conditions on the islands, particularly Saturna. Concerns raised about untransparent public engagement by the B.C. government, specifically the role of small but influential citizen lobby groups in impacting funding allocations and superseding elected officials' input.

- Trustee Boland → Update on tiny homes on wheels (clinics).
 - There will be a clinic at UBCM, as per a proposal from Vanessa Craig from the Regional District of Nanaimo and several others. September 23, early in the morning. Encourages others to attend.
 - Additionally, planning a webinar on tiny wheels in November. Panel discussion, including a mix of people from regional districts.
- Trustee Boland → Update on Saturna road conditions.
 - There are a number of road issues on Saturna.
 - There were lots of letters from residents supporting the cliffside rehabilitation project, which is a good news bad news story. Pressure like that works, but it can dislodge things that might have had a bigger impact. Not the best way to run an investment program.
 - Province needs to ask: What is the priority? What is the overall plan?
 - Generally, roads are very dangerous and a fire hazard. There are many deer hiding, too.
 - “What is the cost impact on projects of citizen mobilization efforts?”
 - There seems to be a “this is the way we’ve always done it” mindset by the province.
- Director Brent → Saturna road conditions cont.
 - Thanks to the local campaign, grant money from the Ministry of Transportation and Transit (MOTT) went towards the cliffside road, not towards the winery which would have supported employment.
 - CRD was asked by the MOTT to provide input on what projects should proceed. CRD indicated a different project than the one chosen. The letter writing campaign changed what elected officials wanted, to basically a very loud minority group.
 - Meeting with Minister of Transport at UBCM; will ask about the funding allocation/engagement process.
- Trustee Morrison → Saturna road conditions cont.
 - There is clearly a process problem that should be corrected.
- Trustee Maude → Road conditions (general).
 - Unpaved roads can function as natural speedbumps. Paving roads can become dangerous, with people going faster.
 - Ministry needs to work with the local community; the little money that it has is often spent in the wrong place.
- Trustee Falk → Collective communication re public engagement.
 - We should issue a collective communication to MOTT regarding the role of public engagement/consultation (SGI Forum could write to MOTT: “Hi! We see multiple problems around the islands with public engagement. Engagement should also connect with locally elected decision-makers, too. Community consultation is frequently used as the B.C. government’s get out of jail free card – seen it with BC ferries, too.”).
 - Islands Trust needs another meeting with Shawn Haley.

- West coast climate action network. BC provincial groups are now in a position where they have standing meeting. It is because climate action secretariat doesn't know how to do engagement. Mechanisms that could be offered as Trust/CRD that province isn't able to.

Action item - Director Brent will include Rob in the UBCM meeting with Minister of Transit.

Action item – Trustees Boland and Morrison will draft a letter to MOTT, cc'ing the Premier, about improving public engagement. Will coordinate a meeting with Shawn Haley, perhaps for UBCM. There are engagement mechanisms through CRD/Islands Trust that would be helpful to the province.

Discussion – Salish Sea Port Authority

Summary: Revisited the idea of the Indigenous-led Salish Sea Port Authority as followed up on with local Chiefs & Council in July by MP May. Given we have not received any response from Chiefs/Councils, where do we go from here?

- Trustee Maude → Raised this agenda item in order to keep Salish Sea Port Authority on our radar.
 - If Indigenous interest isn't there for Port Authority, we need Plan B.
 - Port Authority is the only way we can preserve and protect the Salish Sea.
- MP May → Will send a new letter that essentially says “Do we have your permission to pursue an Indigenous-led harbour authority? Can MP May have permission to see how far she can get?
 - Trustee Morrison → Just got looped into tight circle of science people at ICCC has a bit more voice than in the past, which she can use as leverage in writing this letter.

Action item - MP May and Trustee Morrison will write a follow up letter that requests First Nations' forbearance as we try to shake things up. Aysha from MP May's office will reach out to Ned Taylor (WLC local government liaison) for insight on the viability of this request. Ned is also connected to the living lab network with WSÁNEĆ and Songhees.

Discussion – Supporting First Nations Participation in the Forum and Reviewing Structure and Priorities

Summary: Open discussion about how to better support First Nations participation in the Forum. Questions to consider - What is working, what could be improved? How can we continue to innovate, include, and expand impact?

- Trustee Morrison → Could we leverage grant monies from Islands Trust to promote engagement with First Nations through this Forum? Is there any engagement money?
 - First Nations engagement has been a challenge for the Trust as a whole, too.
 - Where jurisdiction lands with DRIPA obligations really lies with the province.
- Trustee Falk → Echoes past challenges with engagement.
 - Many Nations came back to Trust saying they don't have an interest in these jurisdictional questions.
 - How can we find out which Nations have an interest and which do not? Do we have a list of people who are interested in engaging? Who should we consult with from within and across Nations? Regular people from Nations want to represent their views.... Not just elected leadership and Chiefs. How can we ensure their voices are heard and respected too?
 - Ninety-nine percent of the work of improving engagement is on the end of the non-First Nation world. Who to talk to, and how to talk to them; how can we change to make ourselves safer to communicate with. We need to slow down, look inside, figure out what our role should be or is, including how can we listen enough to meet their needs.

- Trustee Maude → How appropriate is it for us to be doing what we're doing as a Forum without the most important perspective? Without engagement on a simple level?
 - When Adam was the MLA, he brought his perspective, and he communicated out.
 - Communication is a lesser problem when you have one First Nation. Islands Trust encompasses 31.
 - One squeaky wheel does not speak for the community.
- Trustee Morrison → Consultation is challenging, too, because there are lots of non-registered Indigenous people among the islands. People who never got registered, people who are from a different territory who are in this region who don't have ancestral ties but are Indigenous and have unique needs/perspectives, nonetheless. Complicated dynamics regionally.
 - What does it mean to go at relational speed?
 - The problem is that we as well as Nations are taxed in a million directions. Someone needs to do the slow down move and have conversation by conversation with the folks in this region.
 - For now, each of us can go to Indigenous events and meet Indigenous people where they are at. We are a rotating group and relationships don't rotate.
 - When there are errors in relationship-building, we must face these mistakes and work through them.
- MP May → One way or another, we do not make decisions as an SGI Forum. We cannot assume the interests of nations.
 - There are not land "claims" in this area. We treat, as settlers, claims as if they are competing but relationships over generations have been cooperative and collaborative.
 - Burden of consultation on First Nations is significant.
 - Moving forward: We do what we are doing and do it respectfully.
 - High degree of respect for Nations amongst this table, continue to communicate it repeatedly.

Action item - Deb will share a paper on "relational tipping points" (Kyle White). Papers makes the "go at the speed of trust" argument.

Action item – Dig into relationships in our own spaces, bringing lessons from these relationships into the SGI Forum. Keep returning to the question of how can we do better? Keep as individuals trying to schedule meetings with Chief and Council. Attend events whenever invited and be patient. Keep seeking these opportunities.

Discussion and Vote – Cross-Border Forum

Summary: Update on Forum planning by Trustee Patrick and Aysha Emmerson (MP May's office). Discussion of 1) Forum structure and focus (environmental and economic); 2) Forum invitee list; Request for funding from SGI Forum budget [\$1,000-1,500] for Cross-Border Forum. Questions considered: What does success look like following this forum? What tangible outcomes can come from the forum? Who else should be at the table?

- Reviewed and approved major themes and agenda for the Cross-Border Forum.
 - MP May → this Forum to help lay groundwork towards international biosphere reserve for the Salish Sea.
- Goal of the Forum should be causal relationship-building, more than any communications plan or public statement. View this as an initial opportunity to build relationships, and other outcomes will follow.
- Reviewed list of invitees. Invites will be sent by September 17. All SGI Forum members are invited, if we end up having too many people from the Canadian side rather than the U.S. side we will consider nominating a smaller number of participants.

Action items - 1,500 approved for Cross-Border Forum from the SGI Forum Budget, which could go towards honorarium for First Nations. This leaves 1,000 earmarked for the website, 500 for Misc/catering. Aysha Emmerson and Chloe Straw will shift catering budget for Forum meetings to the MP/MLA budget.

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Discussion – Next Steps on Issues Raised in Updates

Summary: Closing reflections, remarks, and announcements.

- **Review of action items**
 - Island Health will be added to next meeting's agenda as a distinct discussion point
 - Trustees Morrison and Boland will write a letter to Shawn Haley / MOTT
 - MP May will resend letter to Chiefs & Council, co-drafted with Trustee Morrison
 - MP May's office will reach out to Ned Taylor (WLC)
 - Chloe (Islands Trust) and Aysha (MP May) connect re: Cross-Border Forum budget
 - SGI Forum invites will be sent to Trustees in the next two weeks
 - Chloe will share more information regarding Stewardship Education Program
- **Nomination of Co-Chairs for November 14 meeting: Paul Brent and Earl Rooke.**
- **November 14 may be a more difficult date than anticipated. MP May's office will ask for RSVPs via email, so that we know we have enough interest and availability for a virtual session.**

Currently, the next SGI Forum meeting is scheduled to take place remotely on **November 14, 12:00pm-1:30pm**, via Microsoft Teams.

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