

qathet Regional District

ELECTORAL AREA 'A' NEWSLETTER

**for September 2019
from Patrick Brabazon, Director**

This newsletter is sent to all Electoral Area 'A' residents of the qathet Regional District. At the end of this newsletter, you will find my telephone number and my e-mail address. I welcome your comments.

I will take the bus...

Well, I would if I could. I was a regular passenger on public transit while living in Victoria. Their excellent bus service provided a convenient and economical way of commuting to work or to visit downtown. Yes, it rains in Victoria, but many bus stops have shelters and downtown storefronts provided excellent waiting areas.

Shift forward in time and space, I find myself living in a rural area with no bus service at all, let alone shelters. Rural transit [Paratransit] is a joint venture of regional districts and BC Transit with the latter funding some 57 per cent of the cost. When elected to the Regional Board, I fought for a regional service that would permit people in rural areas, say Lund, to travel for work in Powell River and return later. We got two runs a week; not what was needed but a start.

Starting next year, we will have one more run scheduled for a total of three days a week. One more, small, step on this very long road. One big step is getting some of us out of the rain and into a new, lighted shelter. BC Transit has provided 64 per cent of the total cost and Community Works Funding [federal gas tax] and the qathet Regional District have provided the remaining balance. With our area getting two of the four shelters offered, we can be thankful while still recognizing the need for more, and more we will go for. One more day of service, one more shelter, one more commuter run, all making it easier to live and work outside of the city.

The news farther south is not so hopeful. The loss of regular and efficient passenger service to the Greater Vancouver area has serious social and economic penalties for our community. The rise of improved courier/freight service has removed a profitable support from an economically marginal passenger run. This means the decline in service and the loss of a run to the Vancouver airport.

One admittedly inadequate solution is improved paratransit service to Saltery Bay with the Sunshine Coast Regional District providing regular service from Earls Cove to Langdale ferry terminal. Both legs would have to be coordinated with BC Ferries. Passengers would have to walk on and off the ferries with luggage in tow. While this is not an ideal solution, short of greatly increased passenger fares, this appears to be the most likely alternative to a complete

loss of service. For now, we are just talking, with no new busses in sight.

We are growing...

There are a few more residents than there were some years ago. The last census puts 1,080 folks in Area A, a 9.3 per cent increase since 2001. This is the largest percentage increase in any area of the qathet Regional District. Interestingly, three of the electoral areas had greater growth in percentage terms than the municipality. It has long been a concern of some Powell River Councillors that electoral area taxes are lower than the City's and thus draw development "out of town." Maybe so, but those concerns always ignored the reality of providing for our own water and septic, whether by drilling our own well and installing a septic tank and field or by joining the various water and sewage systems in our area. We take care of our own.

Parks

The qathet Regional District has several parks including the two well-known campgrounds at Haywire Bay and Shelter Point. Less well known are the various sites that are protected but not developed. These include places like Rossander Park in Area C and our own Diver's Rock. These parks are simply set apart for the benefit of all of us. Little or no money is spent on them other than that which is necessary for protection against wildfires and the occasional cleanup after those who are not as considerate as we are. These are "green spaces."

The qathet Regional District is establishing a parkland acquisition fund with the intent to raise the funds necessary to expand our green spaces through purchase of such suitable land that might become available. It is intended that the greater part of the money will come from grants and, yes, donations from individuals and corporations. These monies will be held for the specific purpose of acquiring land for you and me, and the generations to come.

Garbage

Each September, regional districts and municipalities meet together at the Union of BC Municipalities convention. The discussions are wide ranging, comprehensive, and are known to initiate change in provincial government policy. This year a big item is concern about the handling of packaging and printed-paper in the recycling program, especially industrial, commercial and institutional packaging. I am referring to the ubiquitous plastic wrapping that comes shipped with a vast variety of our consumer purchases. British Columbians want this stuff eliminated or fully included in the recycling program inclusive of the Industrial, Commercial and Institutional (ICI) sector.

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