



John Horgan MLA Juan de Fuca

Community Report FEBRUARY 2010

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Resource Lands for Sale

As some of you have read or heard on the local media, the Western Forest Products lands around Shirley and Jordan River are back up for sale. There are 61 lots on the market, including 960 hectares of Jordan River waterfront and town site, Jacob Creek waterfront, 487 hectares around Shirley, 4 parcels by Muir Creek and 227 hectares adjacent to Sooke Potholes Regional Park.

With the downturn in the economy and the decline in lumber sales, it's no surprise that forest companies are now involving themselves in the real estate market. But I have to question the wisdom and long-term benefit of this decision. The west coast of our Island is world-renowned for its beauty. We have mountains to hike, trails to walk, waves to surf, and flora and fauna to photograph. People come here from all over the world to experience what they no longer have in their countries – natural beauty in its purest form. And when people visit our region they stay at local B&Bs, eat at local restaurants and shop in local stores. Our economy and residents benefit when tourists visit.

Western Forest Products may say it has every right to sell the land. But I have to ask where the BC government has been on this issue?

This story first arose three years ago when Rich Coleman, the former Minister of Forests, let WFP remove its land from Tree Farm License 25. This decision was ill-conceived, unnecessarily secretive, and made without regard for the interests of the residents in our area or the future of our coastal communities.

The province's independent Auditor General John Doyle did a review of this sale and found that the decision was made without sufficient regard for the public interest and placed greater weight on assisting a private company's bottom line rather than the public interest. A damning indictment indeed.

The province has known for some time that Western Forest Products intended to sell the land. Why didn't they try to strike a deal three years ago? One year ago? One month ago? We have now learned that UBC attempted to purchase lands for forest research but negotiations

have stalled. Now the land is open to the highest bidder – whether they live in Abu Dabhi, Alabama or Alberta – and the province of BC is not at the table.

And where are our area MLAs, Murray Coell and Ida Chong? Both have a seat at the cabinet table but they seem to be silent. Perhaps they, like the rest of the Liberal MLAs, are quite content putting corporate profits ahead of the public interest. Government accountability should be the first order of business, not the last. Admit there is a problem and work with people to find a solution. How tough is that?

I've called on the provincial government to make an offer on this land. We will not get these precious pieces of land back once the black top starts to flow.

Please let me know how you feel about this and, if you agree with me that these lands should be saved, I encourage you to write to Bill Bennett, Minister of Community and Rural Development, to share your thoughts with him. He can be reached at cd.minister@gov.bc.ca.

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COMMUNITY EVENTS

February 13 Mardi Gras Masquerade Dance 2010 "Queen of Hearts" featuring Slim Sandy & the Shakin' Rhythm Daddies plus 30 min swing dance lesson. 7-10 pm at the Ambrosia Event Centre, 638 Fisgard St. \$30 tickets available at Larsen Music, 1833 Cook St. A fundraiser for Threshold Housing Society (transitional housing for youth).

February 13 Two for One Sweetie Swim at SEAPARC Leisure Complex from 1-5 pm. 2168 Phillips Rd in Sooke. 250-642-8000.

February 16 Grow a Native Plant Garden. Free workshop on gardening with drought-resistant native plants, including a tour of a native plant garden. Hosted by the CRD at Swan Lake Nature House, 3873 Swan Lake Road in Victoria, from 1-4 pm. Workshop is limited to 18 participants and pre-registration at 250-479-0211 is required.

February 16-19 Screening Mammography at the Sooke Health Unit, 2145 Townsend Road. For appointment call toll-free 1-800-663-9203.

February 19 Pro-D Day Skate and Swim at Juan de Fuca. 1-2 pm for skating at the arena (Toonie admission) and 1-2 pm for swimming at the pool (regular admission).

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Everything You Wanted to Know About Crystal Meth

On January 28th, John attended the provocative and alarming 'Everything you want to know about Crystal Meth and Drug Addiction' presentation sponsored by the Crystal Meth Prevention Society of BC, Spencer Middle School and the City of Langford. Crystal

methamphetamine, also known as speed, crank, crystal, tweak, meth, ice Tina or jib, is made from a substance called amphetamine. It is a synthetic stimulant that affects the central nervous system and often leads to a confused and disorganized behaviour, paranoia, hallucinations,

increased aggressiveness and antisocial behaviour and overdoses are relatively common. Addiction can happen after just one use. Education about the drugs dangers and devastating effects is the best tool to prevent youth from using the drug. Learn more at

crystalmeth.bc.ca. John is pictured with Mark McLaughlin from the Society, Jim Bennett from the Victoria Real Estate Board and four UVic students who are in their third year of studies and doing their practicum with the Society.



Small Business Being Shut Out

John recently held a meeting with local small business owners who work for BC Hydro keeping power lines clear. There are 32 locally owned and operated 'vegetation management' contractors around the province, each with between three and 30 employees, who exist almost exclusively to provide service to BC Hydro. These local contractors have specific training and equipment to work around live power lines so electricity does not need to be shut

down while maintenance is being completed.

A change in the way Hydro tenders these contracts puts small businesses at a disadvantage. Steve Lush, a consultant contractor from Victoria, said that local businesses will get squeezed out by corporate giants and you can bet that, once the little guys are gone, costs will rise.

John is calling on the provincial government to support small business and a competitive bid process.

COMMUNITY EVENTS

February 20 *An evening devoted to mushrooms* hosted by Andy MacKinnon. Starting off with a potluck featuring mushrooms followed by the viewing of the film, 'Know Your Mushrooms' – explaining some of mushrooms many mysteries – this promises to be an eventful evening. 6 – 9 pm at the Metchosin Community House, 4430 Happy Valley road. Tickets are \$15 and can be purchased at the Community House. A fundraiserr for the Metchosin Foundation.

February 26 *Parents and Tots Drop-in* at Metchosin Community House. Moms, Dads and caregivers are invited to join this fun group. Children will enjoy games, books and craft opportunities and adults can connect with other parents and caregivers. 9:30 am – Noon at 4430 Happy Valley Road.

February 28 *Early Signs of Spring Guided Walk* at Lone Tree Hill Regional Park. Follow a CRD Regional Parks naturalist up Lone Tree Hill, looking for early signs of spring along the way. Meet in the parking lot off Millstream Road (carpooling is recommended as parking is limited). Suitable for anyone 5 years and older, from 1 – 2:30 pm.

March 9 *'Diary of a Wimpy Kid'* games, trivia and more at the Juan de Fuca library from 2:30 – 3:30 pm. For ages 8-12.

March 12 *Finding Nemo* free screening at the Juan de Fuca Library. 2 – 4 pm. Younger children should be accompanied by an adult.

Every Tuesday and Thursday *Free adult walking group* in Sooke from 10 – 11 am. Must pre-register. Call 250-642-8000.

Every Friday *Vital Vittles Free Lunch* is open to everyone, single parents with tots, adults, seniors and teens. From 11:30 am – 1 pm at Holy Trinity Anglican Church (1962 Murray Road, junction of Otter Point Road and Sooke Road).