

DIRECTOR'S NEWS

AN UPDATE FROM SCRD DIRECTOR, DONNA SHUGAR



Contact info: Please call or email me about any issue of concern: (604)885-2261 ext 6505, donna_shugar@hotmail.com. Visit my "Gumboot Office," Saturday mornings 9-11. I am also in the process of developing a website with the generous support of Frank Henning at Eyesoar Graphics. Check out www.creekdirector.ca in the next several weeks. This newsletter will be posted there or I can send it to you via email if you request it. I will be available at the RCCA meeting on April 25 at the Hall if you have any questions.

THE PARK PROPOSAL

The alternative approval process completed on April 3 with more than 10% of the electorate (589) voting against purchasing the property by the bridge at the mouth of Roberts Creek. At the public meeting on March 28 most of those expressing their views against the purchase were concerned about the price. It is possible that if the lots do not sell, the price may come down to a level that will be acceptable to those people. If that happens and the proposal comes forward from members of the public again, I will recommend using a referendum to gauge public sentiment.

THE 2007 SCRD BUDGET

The 3 month SCRD budget process is now complete. There will be a tax increase this year, but we worked very hard to keep it as low as possible. Each area has a different basket of services and different levels of assessment so their taxation levels vary. For Roberts Creek, our increase will be about \$150,000, an average of 11.3% over 2006 although individual properties may differ from that percentage depending on how their assessments have changed since last year. 2/3 of this increase comes from improvements to the Roberts Creek Fire Protection service. In addition to our Fire Dept., Roberts Creek also has its own Library Service accounting for \$12,000 of our increase. Another reason for our increase is the fact that our assessments have gone up more than some of the other areas. That means that Roberts Creek pays a larger portion of shared services.

In March SCRD staff offered the public 2 budget presentations, one in the daytime and one in the evening. Unfortunately not one member of the public attended. One important factor to note is that Regional Districts' budgets are not organized in the same way as municipal budgets. Because each Regional District service has different participants contributing to its costs, their budgets must be kept distinct. If there is a surplus in planning, for example, it cannot be used to cover a deficit in another function such as recycling. Similarly, if an unforeseen need arises in one area money cannot be taken from another to address that need.

Roberts Creek is involved in 39 different Regional District functions including parks and other recreation services, planning, transit, water services, and animal control. Some of these programs have the same budget as in 2006; others, such as General Administration, actually went down this year. What follows is an explanation of some of the programs which will see an increase.

Recreation: The 2 new recreation facilities (approved by referendum) account for a large % of the RD's total budget. There will be some operating costs in 2007, even while we complete the construction, to be ready to open later this year. The Sechelt pool will open in the Fall and we are hopeful that the Gibsons arena will be ready for Christmas. Pender Harbour, with the highest rise in property assessments in 2007, is not in the Recreation Facilities Function. This leaves a much greater share for the other areas to cover, with Roberts Creek paying \$224,163, 5.3% higher than in 2006. (This includes the cost of operating the Gibsons pool and the Sechelt arena now both part of this function. It is still well within the amount approved in the referendum.)

Dakota Ridge: This is another recreation program which was approved by a public process. In 2007 the debt payments for this cross country ski and snow shoe facility kick in. Roberts Creek pays \$8,351.

Ports: 6 years ago when the federal government decided to divest small local docks such as the ones at Keats, Gambier and Thormanby Islands, the SCRCD asked the electorate whether they wished to take these over. This met with approval by the voters. For 5 years there was an annual federal grant to cover the costs associated with operating these docks. In 2007 there is no more grant and the costs have to be covered by local taxation. Roberts Creek's 2007 share is \$24,167. Again, Pender Harbour is not a participant in this function.

Solid Waste: The Sechelt landfill normally operates at a profit but experienced a large deficit in 2006. Weather issues in Nov and Dec resulted in lower than anticipated tipping fees from the construction industry. This deficit has to be recovered and accounted for in the budget. Staff are keeping a close eye on monthly targets and are reporting regularly to the Board. So far, the landfill is doing well this year. **Recycling** is also part of our solid waste program. We have decided to do an operations review of our recycling program but we will be conducting that study over 2007 and 2008 to spread the costs out. Roberts Creek's share of Regional Solid Waste is \$47,296.

Emergency Planning: Roberts Creek is paying \$20,145 into this function in 2007, a 27.9% increase. It is one of those services that you don't see, at least until it is needed! With a full time staff person in place, we now have an emergency mobile hospital and a solid plan for both local and regional emergencies.

Fire Protection: This is another program that I hope you never need to use. We pay for all the costs of our own fire department. Our expenditures this year cover increased training for our volunteer fire fighters, improved safety equipment, and some much needed improvements to the fire hall.

We are also carrying forward a smaller surplus than we did last year. The total taxation for our Fire Dept is \$351,080 which is 39.7% over last year and, as mentioned, is 2/3 of Roberts Creek's increase.

Libraries: Roberts Creek has been helping to pay for the libraries in Gibsons and Sechelt as well as our own Reading Room for a number of years, but until now at a rate much lower than other areas pay. We raised that a bit in each of 2006 and 2007 so that now our contribution to library services is more in line with what taxpayers in other areas spend. Our contribution is still a bit lower to acknowledge that we are supporting 3 different programs. Your tax contribution entitles your family to membership in both the Sechelt and Gibsons libraries and this in turn gives you access to any library in BC. You can order and renew books on line, pick them up and return them in either Gibsons or Sechelt and use any other program any library offers. In 2007 Roberts Creek is paying \$110,570, an increase of 12.3% over 2006. Our rate is \$13.22 per \$100,000 compared to \$13.70 for areas E & F.

The Pier: Last year \$18,000 was budgeted for the pier repairs. This has been carried over for 2007. In addition, a tourism grant of \$6,000 has been received from the provincial government. Another \$4,000 has been added to the pier repair budget for 2007 from the Community Parks Function.

Planning: A small amount of money has been allocated to prepare for an LRMP and Regional Growth Strategy. These are provincially funded projects and we do not yet know whether the government will approve our request for funding. In addition, we have allocated some money for technical background reports for reviews of the West Howe Sound and Roberts Creek OCPs. The reviews will begin in 2008.

OTHER NEWS

BURNING: Please note that we are now in the no backyard burning season at least until October 16.

Earth Day: Join your friends and neighbours down at the mandala 12 – 5pm for the 2007 Earth Day celebrations. Try to avoid taking your car! You can join the bike rally which will leave Spin Cycles bike shop on the highway near Pratt Rd around 10:30. The cyclists will travel along the Lower Rd picking people up as they go. If you must take your car, there will be parking available at the school. Please do not clog the roads with parked cars as we want the buses to be able to run as usual. Thanks!

RCCA: The Roberts Creek Community Association AGM is Wed April 25 at 7:30pm at the Hall.