HICEEC

Oct./21 First Edition

**Better internet—now it’s up to you**

High-speed internet is coming to Hornby next year, but only if we ask for it. The CVRD will provide 10% of the ~$7.6 million it will cost to bring fibre-optic cables to every household on Hornby and Denman (the provincial government, and City West, will pay the rest), if the two islands’ residents pass a referendum agreeing to a slight tax increase to repay the loan the CVRD will need to take out for our share.

The referendum will be on November 27. The CVRD will hold Zoom calls on Oct. 6 to more fully explain the referendum, and why your vote of support is needed. Meanwhile, an outline of the project is available on [www.hiceec.org](http://www.hiceec.org), in the Internet section. And if you’re interested in getting a fibre optic drop to your house, be sure to register at <http://www.citywest.ca/dropping-in>. By the way, with all this on the horizon, you might want to think twice before locking yourself into a long-term contract with another internet service provider.

**Taxing visitors**

HICEEC continues to pursue the MRDT tax. This is the 3% tax levied on short-term visitors to lodges, resorts, cabins, vacation rentals, and bed & breakfasts (“fixed roof” accommodations is the official term). Campsites, glamping, and boat moorage are excluded.

Public consultation on uses for the funds was interrupted by COVID, but this July the MRDT consultant conducted an all-inclusive public survey. This drew 264 participants, split nearly evenly between business owners (largely accommodation providers) and non-business owners.

In August, local stakeholders—the accommodation providers who’ll be collecting the tax—supported using the funds to address the primary challenges the island faces from tourism: impacts related to the carrying capacity of the island, lack of affordable workforce housing, diversifying the economy from the July/August peaks, and educating our guests on the limitations of island resources. As required, HICEEC and the consultants are finalizing a 5-year strategic plan and submitting the application to the government.

**Hibernation season for the bus**

The fourth year of the transit pilot project on Hornby has been completed. Tremendous thanks to the Hornby Bus Steering Committee for all their work this year, which brought in over 3000 riders despite continuing COVID complications.

Highlights since 2019 (the bus was COVID grounded in 2020):

* HICEEC took over ownership and management of the bus from the Tribune Bay Outdoor Ed. Centre
* COVID Safety Officer implemented bus protocols
* Bus stops were established, with a bench installed at the Thatch and a new shelter built at the Coop Corner (these were classic Hornby hand-built “barn raisings”—special acknowledgement to Peter Mills and Al Dickie for spearheading these projects)
* Mainroad Contracting has supplied an off-season parking spot for the bus in the highway’s compound. Yay, Doug Nixon!
* Collaborations with Denman Works and the CVRD re a cross-Denman connector

**Ferry update**

Karen Ross attended the Ferry Advisory Committee meetings, in place of Frank Frketich, in Victoria. Her notes from those meetings are on the hiceec.org website; see “FAC Reports” in the *Our Community* section.

**HICEEC’s new home**

HICEEC has secured a 5-year lease for the former School Administration modular. This office will also provide access to key services for the new Natural History Centre.

Many thanks to the Thatch for housing HICEEC, and a trial Visitor Centre, while we sought a long-term home.

**Best wishes**

Sadly for us, our staff member Rowan Morse has submitted her resignation. We wish her well in future endeavours.

Submitted on behalf of the volunteer HICEEC Board: John Heinegg, Katherine Ronan, Carlyn Bishop, John Grayson, Jack Hornstein, Donna Tuele, Bee Wolf-Ray, and Rudy Rogalsky.