

November 12, 2020

Chair and Board
Comox Valley Regional District

Re: VIRL and ICF External Appointment Reporting to the Board

As the electoral area director for Electoral Area 'A', I would like to present closing year reports on my two CVRD external appointments. I wish to thank the board for entrusting me with representing the CVRD on the Vancouver Island Regional Library and Island Corridor Foundation boards. I have very much enjoyed these assignments and would look forward to continuing in both roles. I will welcome questions at our meeting.

Vancouver Island Regional Library (VIRL Board) 2020-2021

The Vancouver Island Regional Library system includes regional district and municipal partners from just outside Victoria, to Haida Gwaii. It is governed by a board of 38 people, with a budget of about \$40 million. Over the years, provincial funding has dropped from 20% of the budget to just about 5% now. So Regional Districts and Municipalities truly are in the driver seat.

In 2020, I was re-elected to the 11-person Executive, along with Manno Theos representing Courtenay, and new to the team Nicole Minions representing Comox. Brenda Leigh from Strathcona Regional District got the nod again as Chair of the Board.

Overall, I can report that while the organization was challenged by the COVID shut-down, many steps and measures were taken to alleviate the blow and plan conservatively for the re-openings. Some of our actions included:

- ✓ Laying off staff, but with pay, during the shut-down months.
- ✓ Emphasizing digital library usage – which went up over 150% during the COVID months, with membership expanding as well.
- ✓ Implementing “take-out” options, and as of September re-opening some of our libraries with restrictions.
- ✓ Deferring the Strategic Planning exercise to 2021 or 2022, recognising the challenges of doing this during COVID.
- ✓ Planning for a 1.87% levy increase for 2021 (less than originally anticipated), to provide some relief to members.
- ✓ Continuing to forge ahead with our capital upgrade plans. The Courtenay renovation is planned for 2021 and moving forward.
- ✓ We anticipate to close the year with a small surplus, which can be deployed for the restart in 2021.

At the board meeting I will circulate literature for those interested in more information. Should I be re-appointed to the Library board, my intent will be to stand again for an executive role on the Board. With the Comox Valley as a whole contributing about 15% of the total budget, I am happy that we are well-represented as a region.

Island Corridor Foundation 2020-2021

The Island Corridor Foundation (ICF) is a federally registered charity established for the purposes of owning and managing the former E&N Corridor on Vancouver Island. The foundation recognizes the importance of this corridor as a link that connects Vancouver Island communities economically, socially and spiritually, today, and for all time.

The Foundation is unique in that its members are five regional districts, and 11 First Nations. In my view, it is truly one of the earliest and best examples of regional partnership and proactive reconciliation on Vancouver Island.

In 2020, the ICF advanced the following goals:

- ✓ Collaborated with the Province of BC to complete a [revival assessment of the tracks](#). This resulted in three possible scenarios and levels of upgrades, ranging from high-tech commuter rail in the Greater Victoria area to more traditional service from Victoria to Courtenay and Port Alberni.
- ✓ Won a court case brought by the Snaw-Nah-As Nation regarding reversion of the property to them because of lack of use. However, importantly the [Court decision](#) suggests that should the Right-of-Way not be used for rail purposes, the right of reverse would most likely apply should rail not be restored or prioritized.
- ✓ Continued to do basic upkeep on the tracks, and advance trail projects with regional districts in the South.

My term on the ICF board is coming up at the next AGM, and I would very much look forward to staying on as the CVRD representative, and potentially putting my name up for Vice-Chair. As the Foundation continues to work to maintain a continuous track along Vancouver Island, and as Vancouver Island municipalities call for better integrated transportation, I believe the usefulness of the ICF for both active transportation and green public transportation options will grow more evident in the years ahead. The unique partnership between regional districts and First Nation communities, despite the many challenges, also posits the foundation as agent in the work of reconciliation.

Sincerely,

D. Arbour

Daniel Arbour
Director