

# Stakeholder Meetings

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A series of meetings were held with selected stakeholder groups to explain the study and hear commentary and questions from these interested parties. The meetings consisted of the following.

- February 28, 2009:
  - Fire department representatives
  - Farming community members
  - Mill Bay Incorporation Committee and Mill Bay Community League
- March 9 and March 10, 2009:
  - Water system representatives
  - Pauquachin First Nation
  - Cowichan Tribes
  - Malahat First Nation
  - CVRD Director for Electoral Area A (Brian Harrison)
  - CVRD Director for Electoral Area B (Ken Cossey)
  - CVRD Director for Electoral Area C (Gerry Giles)

## Fire departments

Members of the four fire departments were invited to meet with the consultant on February 28th to discuss the study. Participants included:

- John Anderson (Mill Bay Fire Department)
- Dave Balding (Chief, Malahat Fire Department; also study committee member)
- Ron Beck (Mill Bay Fire Department)
- Ken Bulcock (Cowichan Bay Fire Department)
- Terry Culp (Chief, Mill Bay Fire Department)
- Dan Debry (Manager, CVRD Emergency Services)
- Keith Shields (Trustee, Shawnigan Fire District)
- Dennis Whitehead (Shawnigan Fire District)
- Mike Wright (Deputy Chief, Shawnigan Fire Department)

Here is a summary of discussion points and questions made by fire representatives.

- What have been the experiences of merging/blending multiple fire departments in new municipalities? Are there examples?
- Would there have to be fire protection provided everywhere in a municipality, including areas not covered now?
- Why isn't Area D (Cowichan Bay) part of the study?
- What triggered the study? Who started it?
- What are the advantages of being a municipality, from a fire protection view?
- Would there have to be career fire fighters? We are all volunteers now.
- Improvement districts are the "closest" form of local government and know their community best.
- It's often difficult to get residents to serve as trustees.
- Municipal status would bring both positives and negatives from a fire department viewpoint.
- Municipal status would mean expanded service (more preventative inspections, for example) but this better service would cost more.
- The departments may be staffed by volunteers but they deliver a professional service level.

## **Farming community**

Two meetings were held with the members of the farming community, on February 28th and April 14th. A total of 16 members attended. Here is a summary of the questions and comments they made.

- Would the Ministry of Environment and/or the Ministry of Health play a role in correcting actions that threaten the water supply under the municipal model?
- Would bylaw enforcement be strengthened?
- Who appoints members to the Agricultural Land Commission? Would there be political pressure to appoint people with a certain viewpoint?
- Aren't municipalities essentially focused on promoting growth, which can only threaten farms?
- The ALC didn't provide adequate opposition to the eventual pipeline route through farm land.
- Wouldn't the municipality accelerate requests for removal of ALR land so it can be developed?
- Will the study incorporate material and information from the upcoming study of farming by the CVRD?
- The Right to Farm Act is weak and does not offer as much protection for farm activities as needed. Municipal bylaws and regulations would impede farming operations.
- Meetings with farmers should be in the evening, not the daytime.
- There are no controls on how much water a user can take from the ground, so why would having a municipality help protect the water supply?
- Farmers wouldn't be able to afford the higher water rates that a municipality would levy.
- Farmers would be outnumbered and outvoted in a municipality and their wishes would be second to the wishes of the developed areas.

## **Mill Bay Incorporation Steering Committee and Mill Bay Community League**

On February 28th the Mill Bay Incorporation Steering Committee made a presentation of points it feels need to be considered in the course of the study, including the submission of several briefs and papers. Members in attendance were:

- Roger Burgess (spoke)
- Doug Higginson (spoke)
- Clyde Ogilvie (spoke)
- Archie Staats (spoke)
- Laurie Vasey
- Regan Dowling
- Phil Dowling
- Gary Barrett
- Pam Barrett

The committee supports and promotes the goal of municipal status for Mill Bay. The main points made in their presentations and submissions are summarized as follows.

1. Municipal status is the best way to plan and manage the large-scale development we will experience (potentially over 11,000 new dwellings). The CVRD system does not provide an appropriate way to manage the changes and challenges Mill Bay will face.
2. We are big enough to be a viable municipality.
3. While we can't say taxes would increase or decrease, we note that our current tax bills are within the range seen of many other communities. In fact, we pay higher taxes than some municipalities, due in part to the fact that we do not have as many services to support (and we have no debt to pay off).
4. The current system has not been able to produce the level of parks and recreation development that we want and have developed plans for. This includes not only the connection of a trails network but also sidewalks and upgrades to Kerry Park facilities. Growth and development will exacerbate these shortfalls.
5. We need to plan for and implement cohesive water and sewer networks, rather than expand the patchwork system of unconnected small systems that the current governance model has produced. This includes the need to properly identify groundwater reserves and capacities.

6. The demands of managing the Mill Bay water system is placing an increasing burden on the volunteer trustees of the improvement district and this is not sustainable in the longer term.
7. Under the current governance system we failed to get a community sewer system, but under municipal status we would be far better able to initiate and fund one that would serve Mill Bay efficiently.
8. Municipal status would better enable Mill Bay to coordinate and encourage industrial development to ease the tax burden on homeowners.
9. There should be a Phase 2 study and a referendum, and it should involve Mill Bay as its own municipality rather than a large district municipality that includes Cobble Hill.

### ***Water districts***

A meeting was held with five individuals from two water districts on March 9, 2009 at the Mill Bay Community League Hall. Here is a summary of the comments and questions raised by the attendees.

1. Will the study look at legislative changes to give the current model more local authority (such as subdivision approval)? (Answer: No)
2. Overall community planning is falling by the wayside.
3. Improvement districts must prove they have sufficient capacity when they receive applications for new development.
4. What would happen to current employees? Would they lose their jobs? (Answer: No)
5. We are very close to our customers; everybody knows one another, so we are a very “local” service.
6. A municipality would be better at managing growth and development (it could say no to developers, for example).
7. A municipality could provide better continuity of services by coordinating various services.
8. Improvement districts are flexible and can react quickly because they are small.

### ***First Nations***

Meetings were held with the Pauquachin First Nation and the Malahat First Nation on March 10. In both meetings the First Nations officials expressed interest in our study, asked questions about its goals and processes, and outlined various issues and policies they felt were relevant to the community’s governance, including their planning for activities and development on their reserves. A meeting with Cowichan Tribes was planned for March 10 but was cancelled at their request.

### ***Electoral area directors***

On March 10, individual discussions were held with the three electoral area directors about local governance. All three expressed some concerns or reservations about whether the current model was adequate to meet the needs of future growth and development and to provide solutions for ongoing service issues.