



March 1, 2025

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Salt Spring Island
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Proposal to the Salt Spring LCC for a Economic Development Funding

Update:

Serving local small businesses through collective representation, community networking, membership benefits and, most visibly, through the Ganges Visitors Centre - The Chamber of Commerce has been an important part of the island economy for over 30 years. From the end of 2023 and throughout 2024 the new board (and largely new membership) made important changes to right size operations while focussing on providing the highest impact products and savings to offer such as members mixers, preferential advertising rates and directory listings . We are pursuing progressive steps towards further growth of the island economy, in particular: regional Economic Development; capturing live local business data; studying the feasibility of business licensing, and moving toward establishing a BIA on Salt Spring.

The Chamber's goals are to maintain an appropriate "altitude" of activities thus attracting a wider base of new membership from a range of businesses, and to work collaboratively with the LCC, CRD and other partners to encourage sustainable new growth of the local economy and necessary support systems in the near future.

Visitors Centre:

Provincial data shows the Info Centre on Salt Spring penetrates our tourism population with a higher rate than similar sized destinations. The Info Centre and it's volunteers, play an invaluable role in welcoming and guiding guests of our island to the very services and products (of our members!) that make this island such a unique and memorable experience. Despite this, last year it's total open hours were lowered due to lack of funded student staff, and available volunteer hours, *upon which we are totally dependent*. Nonetheless, the number of visits per hour **increased** not only in the high season (nearly 10% in July and August) but also in the growing shoulder seasons with an increase of 7% across March/April and a jump of 42% in visitors per hour in September/October.

The centre also continues to see growth in local businesses and residents seeking out info about local amenities and connecting with local services and businesses helping an average of more than 100 locals per month within the limited open hours.

The better we support the Info Centre the better we are supporting the link between not only tourism and the local community, but also helping grow resiliency and diversity of our interconnected business economy.

Funding Proposal:

Consistent with these overall goals, the Chamber of Commerce is seeking funding support from the CRD to assist with the following initiatives necessary for the economic viability of the islands. Specific use of funds would be toward:

Salt Spring Visitors Centre : \$15K

To support the operations, staffing and media and marketing as we look for new funding and grant opportunities (*SGITP has pulled back funding support*)

Business Licensing and BIA feasibility work: \$10K

Develop practical next steps to assess the benefits of Business Licensing and to move forward the establishment of a BIA in partnership with CRD