RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS BY SS ARTS COUNCIL: GEORGE GRAMS AND MARK WYATT

How would you enhance support for the arts? What more should be done to promote and sustain the arts?

Goal 3 of the Islands Trust is to 'Sustain Island Character and Health Communities'. Safeguarding and enhancing our cultural heritage is one of the tools at the Trust's disposal for achieving that purpose. The Arts on Salt Spring is a vital contributor to that cultural heritage and we will robustly support the Arts Council within our capacity to do so as trustees.

What opportunities do you see for SSAC to access other regional and provincial funding, in particular from the CRD?

Trustees have limited power to assist the arts. Their responsibilities are restricted to powers over land use. With more emphasis on overall community health, trustees could help to promote economic issues. For example, the SSAC could work within the Chamber of Commerce to promote events. However, in all the years the Trust has been in power, it has provided no funding whatsoever to the Chamber of Commerce to help economic well being. As trustees, Mark Wyatt and George Grams will bring this issue to Trust Council and ask for current policy of NOT assisting Chambers of Commerce to be reviewed.

How will you address the need for affordable housing on SSI?

We will immediately introduce the recommendations of Tim Wake in terms of legalizing secondary suites and cottages. We will immediately call in the file for the Norton Road housing project with a view to determine what can be done to enable that project to proceed. We will work with CRD and housing associations, developers and societies to identify additional lots that might be suitable for affordable housing and we will seek to facilitate affordable housing in appropriate locations through density transfers and the like.

What role do you see that SSAC and the arts have in enhancing economic development on the island?

The health of the arts is dependent on the overall health of our community. That includes the health of our natural environment, our economy, our social fabric and on responsive, vibrant and healthy governance. Balance is needed to achieve that health.

A vibrant arts community will bring benefit to our economy, to our social fabric and to the overall health of our community. Art tourism is an important, high value, low environmental impact asset that should be encouraged. However, we also need to ensure quality accommodation is available for tourists other than at the expense of local housing needs, that we have affordable ferry fees to encourage tourists to visit and that the experience of tourists is enhanced by the preservation and protection of our beautiful natural environment.

How will you address the need to increase tourism to SSI?

We see it as desirable that the planning department work with the Ministry of Transport and with CRD to prepare a traffic management plan for Ganges, particularly in relation to parking during the tourist season.

We believe there is merit in pedestrianizing part of the main street when the Saturday market is on to increase the size of the market and ease pedestrian congestion. We will seek community input on that suggestion and should there be broad support, would suggest a trial period.

We need to encourage the regeneration of our downtown core. The relocation of the fire hall and the redevelopment of the current fire hall site plays an important part in that regeneration. Completing the boardwalk is also an important component.

We need to encourage our downtown vendors to stay open in the evening and on Sundays during the tourist season.

More off season tourist and arts events could extend the tourist season.

Bringing well known, quality artists, performers and performing groups to the island could encourage arts tourism. We would encourage more input and involvement through the reenergized Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber has recently embraced quadruple bottom line practices, which signals that economic, environmental, social and cultural issues are all considered as essential components that breathe holistic well being into our community.

What is your position regarding BC Ferries fares? How would you pursue the interest of SS islanders in having affordable travel?

The increase in ferry fares has seriously damaged tourism on island and increased costs for island residents very substantially. As trustees we will lobby for a reduction in ferry fares through increased provincial subsidies. We will support our ferry committee. As residents and electors, our views are that the ferries should be regarded as marine highways to the islands and be subsidized accordingly. These are our lifeline to other parts of our Province. We would prefer the ferry service to be in public ownership but believe there is little prospect of this being achievable. However, far more stringent oversight is needed on corporate monopolies, particularly those like BC Ferries which provide an essential service.

How will you support SSAC's requests for inclusion of island arts in ferry gift shops and a meeting with ferry officials?

We will lobby BC Ferries and the ferry commissioner supporting this proposal. It makes eminent sense.

George Grams and Mark Wyatt
Candidates for Islands Trust

There is opportunity in Ganges to perhaps look at the zoning and allow some mixed use live/work and to perhaps consider promoting things like loft accommodation above studios. That is something that as a trustee it would be very worthwhile asking the planners to explore as it could assist in furnishing accommodation for artists in a way that ensures they live and work in the space they sell their goods and that doesn't require car ownership