



WHERE DO YOU STAND?

The Salt Spring Arts Council (SSAC) is a not-for-profit 200-member organization that supports and encourages the arts through partnership, advocacy and events. The SSAC enhances the lives of Salt Spring residents by fostering a positive environment for visual, literary and performing artists and artisans, thereby enriching the lives of island residents and generating economic activity on Salt Spring. SSAC also provides funding to emerging and established artists. We look to our leaders to support our goals and assist in the delivery of our arts initiatives. We look forward to your written and verbal responses to our questions. Please forward them to SSAC at 114 Rainbow Road, V8K 2V5 or by email at info@artscouncil.com

Q 1. How would you enhance support for the arts? What more should be done to promote and sustain the arts?

Background: Currently, SSI is rich in the arts— visual, performing and literary—but given the current economic downturn and its impact on the island, it is not clear that this is sustainable. There are huge cost barriers to living and working on SSI and for artists housing costs are prohibitive. Many currently live at or below the poverty line. Retailing artistic products is a challenge even with ArtCraft, the Saturday market, the SSI Cooperative Gallery and retail galleries. Most artists have to seek employment to live and continue with their art; however paid work is often restricted to the service sector where wages are low.

Q 2. What opportunities you see for SSAC to access other regional and provincial funding, in particular from the CRD?

Background: The CRD Arts Development Service was introduced in 2001 but Salt Spring does not subscribe. Yet we are rich in creativity and are home to a wide range of artists and artisans who might benefit from the operational and project funding available from this service and from other regional and provincial agencies.

Q 3. How will you address the need for affordable housing on SSI?

Background: Because many artists live on or below the poverty line, they join the ranks of others in desperate need of affordable housing. Renting adequate accommodation is expensive and purchasing a home is well beyond the reach of most who have difficulty making ends meet

Q 4. What role do you see that SSAC and the arts have in enhancing economic development on the island?

Background: At a time when economic recovery and employment are at the forefront of our local economy the importance and necessity of investing in the arts becomes apparent. The arts not only enhance the quality of life on Salt Spring but also play a major role in our ability to thrive economically. Arts and culture are significant contributors to the local economy and to enhancing the quality of life on the island. The arts sector and patron expenditures reflect strongly in our economic activity.

Q 5. How will you address the need to increase tourism to SSI?

Background: Positioning of SSI as a tourist and cultural destination becomes critical in an economic downturn. Current data indicates that the number of island visitors is down 36 per cent from 2010; the number of tourist groups visiting SSI is down more than 30 per cent. This decline results in reduced income for artists (and all retailers as well as those in the hospitality business) and reduced attendance at island events and performances (e.g. ArtSpring).

Q 6. What is your position regarding BC Ferries fares? How would you pursue the interest of SS islanders in having affordable travel?

Background: The exorbitantly high and ever increasing fares make ferry travel inaccessible not only for potential visitors but also for artists who must transport their work to off-island venues for display and sale. Young artists cannot afford to travel to SSI and personal interaction between island artists and their peers and colleagues off island is limited because of high travel costs.

Q 7. How will you support SSAC's requests for inclusion of island arts in ferry gift shops and a meeting with ferry officials?

Background: SSAC has recently contacted BC Ferries senior management to seek representation for island artists in gift shops on major routes and to explore other possibilities for mutual benefit. To this end, making locally-made arts and crafts available for purchase in ferry gift stores would not only benefit the artists but also contribute toward making ferry rides a part of the magical experience of the islands. To further collaboration between the two bodies, SSAC also asked for a meeting with senior ferry officials to review past efforts and explore future opportunities.