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Executive Services
625 Fisgard Street
Victoria, BC V8W 2S6

T: 250.360.3125
F: 250.360.3130
www.crd.bc.ca

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The Honourable Navdeep Bains
Federal Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development
235 Queen Street
Ottawa, ON K1A 0H5
Via email: ised.minister-ministre.isde@canada.ca

Dear Minister Bains:

RE: INCLUSION OF THE SOUTHERN GULF ISLANDS IN COMMUNITY FUTURES

At the June 12, 2019, meeting of the Capital Regional District (CRD) Electoral Area Directors, the Directors passed a motion recommending that the CRD Board advocate the federal government officially include the Southern Gulf Islands – Galiano, Mayne, Pender, Salt Spring and Saturna Islands in the Community Futures – Cowichan Valley, BC, Service Boundaries.

As you know, Community Futures (CF) is a federally funded program through Western Economic Diversification (WED). The Cowichan Valley office is the closest service centre for our region, in Duncan, British Columbia. It's mandate to serve small business and community economic development in rural BC.

When Community Futures was founded 30 years ago, the rural Southern Gulf Islands were not included in the scope of CF. To this day, Salt Spring Island and the Southern Gulf Islands are not formally included in Community Futures Service Boundaries. This region does not appear anywhere on their website or in their communications.

It's time to remedy this error and officially include the Southern Gulf Islands within the Community Futures of Cowichan Valley, BC Service boundaries. This means having the opportunity to serve on the Board of Directors and its Committees. We are not asking for a new office to be created for the Southern Gulf Islands. We are asking for formal inclusion.

Between June and September of 2018, the Salt Spring Island Community Economic Development Commission (CEDC) had considerable conversation and communication regarding CF inclusion with the WED manager, Service Delivery Partnerships, Vancouver Region. They were advised to speak with the manager of Cowichan Valley Community Futures office. At that time, the manager informed the CEDC and CRD staff that the Cowichan Valley CF does not have the authority to amend its boundaries.

On August 2, 2018, the CRD Office of the Board Chair sent you a letter requesting that, "the three Electoral Areas be declared as "rural" for eligibility for economic development funding."

On August 30, 2018, your office responded with confirmation that, “the WDP welcomes project proposals from organizations that promote economic growth in response to changing and challenging economic circumstances in their communities. Eligibility is not based on a community’s rural or urban classification; rather, proposals are evaluated on the potential for the project to contribute to the community’s economic development.”

In May 2019, CRD staff consulted with staff from WED and was assured again that Community Futures is open to applicants from the Salt Spring and Southern Gulf Islands Electoral Areas, despite the mapped service boundaries on the Cowichan Community Futures website. Since that time, Community Futures staff have been unresponsive when contacted by CRD staff. In any case, ensuring access and inclusion in the Cowichan Community Futures is not an action that rests with Community Futures Cowichan rather, we would appreciate your earliest consideration to make this change and advise WED accordingly.

Being directed to other WED economic development programs is not the answer. Community Futures is a mandated Federal program. It’s time to remedy this inequality and establish formal inclusion of the rural Southern Gulf Islands – Galiano, Mayne, Pender, Salt Spring and Saturna Islands in the Community Futures – within the nearest locale to this region – the Cowichan Valley, BC, Community Futures Service Boundaries.

Sincerely,



Colin Plant
Chair, Capital Regional District Board

cc: CRD Board
Robert Lapham, Chief Administrative Officer, CRD