

Our ferry system IS our highway and road!

BY STEVE AND MYLA AND JACOB FRANKEL, THE CITIZEN DECEMBER 7, 2012

After we retired, over seven years ago, our family chose to move to Thetis Island, full time. I had worked for the Greater Victoria School District for over 23 years before we moved to Thetis Island. My partner/wife also was employed with GVSD.

We loved Victoria, and still do; having said that, our home is now here on Thetis Island. We are very fortunate to be part of this small (350 people year round, many more in summer) vibrant, wonderful community. We had owned our property since 1991; we purchased our (raw) land for recreational purposes, never thinking we would ever live here full time.

Our son Jacob had attended Sir James Douglas Elementary School in Victoria, before we moved here. He then attended our unique and hugely successful, small, K-7 school here, beginning in Grade 3. He excelled, as the majority of our Island kids do attending our educationally first class, little red school house. Jacob is now in Grade 10 at Chemainus high school. Now he is, like other Gulf Island kids, a "school ferry student" in high school. What a life experience, one he will long remember! When it comes to the ongoing BC Ferry debates, we too have also heard that old, redundant, really worn out line; "well, no one told you Gulf Islanders to move there"! I wonder if that same line is used as much for folks living and working in the rural areas of mainland B.C., or, when city folks may complain about their life in Vancouver, the traffic, crime, etc. There is, as you pointed out, a kind of perception, description of the Gulf Islands population, call it a stereotype; no we are not all "drop-outs" from larger society, we are in fact quite the eclectic group, culturally, professionally, personally. Maybe even a microcosm of "any town" or city of Canada.

The vast majority of our Gulf Island residents do realize that we all need to actively participate in dialogue, leading towards hopefully long term sustainable resolutions to support our first class marine transportation system.

We all realize there are incredible costs to run and maintain the world class system we are fortunate to have; high costs that are similar to maintaining our highway systems, bridges, roads (the BC Ferries ARE our Island communities' road system). We all want to do our share as residents and taxpayers.

I guess the government and public at large have to ask if they feel they want to support our rural island communities, which in fact are islands that belong to all Canadians and are a link, in many ways, to the whole country, not just B.C.! The Gulf Islands are in fact, an integral part of the B.C environment, our history, culture and define in part what B.C. is, as well as what our country Canada is!

Steve, Myla and Jacob Frankel Thetis Island