**CEDC 2020 ROAD MAP: FOR ENDURING ECONOMIC WELL-BEING**

Throughout 2019 Salt Spring Island’s Community Economic Commission (CEDC) continued to work towards achieving a sustainable entrepreneurial ecosystem—the means for enhancing collaboration, transparency and access to resources. Commissioners and allies worked collaboratively to set strategic plans for delivering outcomes that will have positive impact across all economic sectors on into 2020.

Leveraging Economies of Scale

Building on our Rural Business Accelerator program, we learned that more support was needed to help local producers grow their businesses. Piloting in mid-2020, local producers will be able to gain economic advantages for sharing the cost of services and/or resources needed to grow and sustain their operations. This means that the costs of production and distribution, marketing, labour will be spread over a larger number of goods to create economies of scale. Our long-term vision includes: the creation of a commercial distribution and export hub, dedicated marketing and sales agents; shared labour force resources, and a value chain designed to facilitate more efficient production of supplies. The initial focus will be on providing local food and beverage producers, artisans and craftspeople, and health and wellness fabricators, the opportunity to access these services. To add strength to this initiative, a representative of the four Southern Gulf Islands is participating in the planning of this enterprise so that the entire Southern Gulf Islands Region will benefit through a coordinated approach.

Innovation for Climate Positive Solutions

CEDC is playing a role in climate action through sector specific strategic planning that will deliver practical climate crisis positive solutions for building community economic resilience. In 2019, CEDC commissioned a feasibility study to determine the economic viability of strengthening the green and clean tech sector as a means for addressing the Island’s pressing sustainability challenges. The fully researched study recommended establishing an *Innovation Centre for Rural Sustainability*, on Salt Spring, which will help foster an environment appropriate for testing and scaling innovative green business solutions and technologies.

As the first project of its kind, this initiative will be a testing ground for how rural island communities can provide targeted support for green solutions. The Centre will also be positioned to attract green and clean tech entrepreneurs who want to test and demonstrate how economically viable, environmentally friendly, and socially sustainable green practices can effectively address rural community issues such as: water quality and quantity, transportation, renewable energy, food security, and waste management. The lessons learned from this project will not only support Salt Spring Island, it will serve as a resource for fellow rural communities facing similar sustainability challenges. The goal for 2020 is to obtain seed funding for developing the business case that will attract social impact investors who seek to engage in ‘responsible local investing’.

Rural islands-Wide Economic Resilience

Another significant achievement of 2019 was the launch of the *Rural Islands Economic Forum.*

CEDC played a lead role in organizing this pioneering event. The Forum, brought together 110 attendees including rural island community builders from across 16+ islands, representatives of Indigenous communities with traditional land on rural islands, local entrepreneurs, leaders in green and clean tech, and tourism, plus rural islands service providers, including government at the federal, provincial and local level. Organizers are moving forward to form a permanent organization – a *Rural islands Economic Partnership* – an entity for cultivating enduring rural islands-wide economic partnerships, with the Forum being its cornerstone. <https://www.ruralislandsforum.com>

Making Sense Of Development Regulations

At the rural local and regional level, CEDC recognizes that there are multiple agencies involved in obtaining land and business development applications. This can be confusing and frustrating, and is often a barrier to attracting green and clean business to the island. To address this challenge, CEDC engaged a researcher and a web developer to create a tool for helping applicants understand the rural development application process. Content for the web-based tool was compiled in 2019 with the input of the Islands Trust and CRD staff. The animated web-based ‘Regulatory Roadmap’, will launch early in 2020, via <https://opportunitysaltspring.ca>

This Regulatory Roadmap will be helpful to Islanders who want to understand and work with the complexities of government in a positive and productive way.

Ongoing Coordinated Advocacy-Information-Collaboration

Advocacy continues to be a cornerstone of CEDC’s mission – to ensure that Salt Spring is fairly represented and has access to resources directed toward supporting economic capacity building for BC’s rural and remote communities. With the support of Electoral Areas Directors, Gary Holman and Dave Howe, we successfully lobbied the CRD Board to call upon Premier Horgan to advance an Order In Council that will officially include our region in the Islands Coastal Economic Trust (ICET) service area. Currently, Salt Spring and the Southern Gulf Islands are prohibited from accessing ICET programs. <http://www.islandcoastaltrust.ca>

We also successfully lobbied the CRD Board to request the Federal Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, to act now to recognize Salt Spring and the Southern Gulf Islands as a full partner in the Community Futures Federal Program via inclusion in the Cowichan Valley Community Futures Boundaries and, in doing so, be eligible to sit on their Board. <http://www.cfcowichan.ca>

Our region has not been an equal partner in the Community Futures boundaries for over 30 years. CEDC will continue to be pro-active and follow-up on these actions early in 2020.

CEDC offers congratulations to the newly formed *Southern Gulf Islands Tourism Partnership* (SGITP), poised in 2020 to set forward a proactive program for smart management of our region’s destination management and marketing. Strategic and sustainable management of our region’s tourism economy is essential for ensuring quality rural islands destination experiences for tourists, visitors, tourism providers and residents. We look forward to continuing to support SGITP this year and beyond.

Through CEDC’s website -- <https://opportunitysaltspring.ca> and social media channels --Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/OpportunitySSI/>: Twitter: <https://twitter.com/OpportunitySSI>) residents, visitors, influencers and all in-between, can access 24/7, current news and information regarding opportunities to live, work and be on Salt Spring Island. *Opportunity Portraits* is a new feature of the site and highlights accomplishments of local entrepreneurs across all economic sectors – check it out: <https://opportunitysaltspring.ca/opportunity-portraits/>

Heading into 2020, CEDC is optimistic about what the New Year and the new decade will bring. A heartfelt thanks goes to CEDC Commissioners, for continuing to provide volunteer community-minded service. We welcome interested individuals who are active in an economic sector – and have the time, and the desire to help make a positive difference in support of enduring community economic well-being for Salt Spring. For more information on joining CEDC or about any or all of these initiatives please contact: [opportunitysaltspring@gmail.com](mailto:opportunitysaltspring@gmail.com)