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WEATHER

Snowfall cancels schools, events

Road crews clear slush over weekend, warmer temperatures on tap

BY ROBB MAGLEY
DRIFTWOOD STAFF



PHOTO BY GAIL SJUBERG

Salt Spring Public Library facilities manager Rob Bartram clears the sidewalk in front of the library on Thursday morning in between two rounds of snowfall that crippled islanders' mobility last week.

The one-two punch of snowfalls on the evening of Tuesday, Jan. 16 and a restart on Thursday brought a sudden end to many islanders' plans, truncating public meetings, cancelling some events and sending students rushing home in the middle of the school day.

Following the previous week's dramatic cold snap, temperatures stayed low enough to bring as much as 24 centimetres (9.5 inches) of snow in two dumps to some parts of Salt Spring Island. While Gulf Islands schools were closed on Wednesday, they re-opened Thursday morning, but faced early closure when snow returned. Gulf Islands School District (SD64) director of operations Colin Whyte said with safety of students and staff as "first priority," the district always strives to keep schools open when possible, and stands ready to pivot toward closure when necessary.

"Yesterday was one of the most challenging types of winter days for us, where roads and weather are fair for the start of the school day, but snow is predicted later in the morning," said Whyte on Friday, adding that district officials had a close eye on weather and road conditions throughout the morning and were prepared for afternoon snowfall and early dismissal.

Despite relatively little notice, schools were closed and early bus transport went smoothly overall, according to Whyte, and everyone did get home safely — although one school bus spent time stuck on the hill at Whims Road.

"No one was hurt," said Whyte, "and we managed to pull the bus out later in the afternoon with no damage. With the help of our Fernwood School administration, the passengers on this bus made it home safely, one way or another."

Whyte gave credit to the broader school community for working together to get everyone home — students, parents and staff — and sent an "extra large thanks" to the transportation team for dealing so professionally with difficult road conditions.

Those roads played havoc with Salt Spring Transit buses as well, as deteriorating conditions forced a shutdown of first minor routes then the entire system overnight, remaining on "main roads only" status during much of the storm. Several businesses closed early to give staff a chance at making it home before the snow stacked up — as did Islands Trust and Capital Regional District administrative offices, for staff living the furthest from Ganges.

Salt Spring's Local Community Commission (LCC) meeting was cut short as weather worsened, postponing some agenda items to the group's Feb. 1 meeting. And while most commissioners made it to the LCC's later town hall session — intended as an opportunity to present and discuss the 2024 budget with the community — just three members of the public attended, and all agreed to end that event early as well.

With shows at ArtSpring scheduled for Jan. 17 and 18, Gulf Islands Secondary School dancers were stymied on both nights, but were able to present a performance on Tuesday, Jan. 23.

Salt Spring's public library cancelled its Friday programs, although the building did open by 10 a.m. for regular services.

A warming trend continued into the weekend, snow turned to rain and Emcon crews continued to clear the persistent heavy slush, first from main roads — those connecting Salt Spring's three ferry terminals — and then the island's secondary roadways.

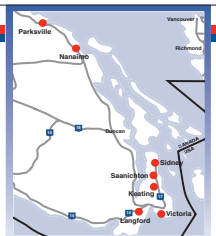
As of press time Monday, more rain and higher temperatures were forecast well into next week.

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EMERGENCY SERVICES

Post-disaster standard met in fire hall design

New building plans submitted for permitting

BY ROBB MAGLEY
DRIFTWOOD STAFF

A lifetime inside the darkest area of every seismic hazard map might have left many of us a little nonchalant about living under earthquake threats.

Not so for emergency responders, thankfully; and after coring and sounding more than 100 feet into the soft — and often moist — dirt beneath the site of Salt Spring Island's future fire hall, staff and trustees decided a little delay in final design work now could make a big difference down the line.

Now, as of the district's meeting Monday, Jan. 15, that final

work is complete — and the new fire hall on Lower Ganges Road next to Brinkworthy will still be fully "post-disaster" compliant, according to CAO Rodney Dieleman, who delivered an updated status report on the delayed start of the project.

"Normal" buildings in seismic hazard zones are designed to remain standing after an earthquake; so-called "post-disaster buildings" are meant to also remain operational. The difference reflects the importance of those buildings' functions during a catastrophic event, and how they are used during a crisis to deliver essential services.

With a little more structural steel, fewer wood beams, slightly smaller windows and a solid foundation underpinning, the fire hall when completed will be more resilient — and

the 90 days taken to review site conditions and redesign to ensure compliance with the "post-disaster" standard won't affect the construction schedule, according to Dieleman.

"We are now at the point where the bus has left the station . . . with a bit of luck, we will actually come in below our projected budget."

ROLLIE COOK
Chair, SSIFPD board of trustees

"The design is complete," said Dieleman. "On Wednesday the consultants will be stamping off their designs, and we'll be sub-

mitting our building plans for permitting. The construction manager has been pricing out his plans since last week, and will be tendering those plans probably before the first week of February."

The standard time those tasks should take, according to Dieleman, is two to three weeks — meaning construction could begin as early as mid-March.

"We are now at a point where the bus has left the station," said board chair Rollie Cook, noting there had also been indications of some better pricing for building materials — and downward-creeping interest rates, possibly reducing the costs of borrowing. "With a bit of luck, we will actually come in below our projected budget."

Dieleman noted there had been no changes to the \$13.7-million project budget,



ROLLIE COOK

construction schedule timeline, or the approved borrowing amount of \$9.7 million authorized by referendum. The project's current financial estimate is \$12.3 million — fully financed, he added, with no increases to taxes or the Salt Spring Island Fire Rescue Service budget for the new fire hall construction and financing.

As of the new year, expenditures totaling \$477,000 have been allocated to building design, civil design, site survey, geotechnical investigations, and associated electrical, structural and mechanical designs, according to Dieleman's report.

For more information as the project continues, visit salspringfire.com/new-firehall.

TOURISM REVENUE

Plan to fund housing with tourism dollars paused

'Equitable' distribution of funding needs data, says Southern Gulf Islands CRD director

BY ROBB MAGLEY
DRIFTWOOD STAFF

An agreement to put tourism tax dollars toward housing is on hold for the moment, as Salt Spring's Local Community Commission (LCC) and the Southern Gulf Islands Tourism Partnership (SGITP) try to come to an agreement on how the money should be spent.

LCC commissioner and Capital Regional District (CRD) director for Salt Spring Island Gary Holman had made a notice of motion, and that body had planned to vote Thursday, Jan. 18 to recommend conditional support for a five-year renewal of the two per cent municipal regional district tax to be allocated to the SGITP. Those conditions included allocating the online portion of the tax for affordable housing, with employee housing being "top priority"; allocating \$100,000 per year to the CRD for the rural housing coordinator position; allocating \$50,000 per year for a housing voucher program; and that the remainder be placed into an affordable housing

reserve — added to the \$200,000 that the SGITP already has allocated.

The understanding had also been that the allocation of these resources across Salt Spring and the other Southern Gulf Islands would be "equitable" and reflect the proportion of revenue from the two Electoral Areas. But Salt Spring commissioners deferred the motion until their Feb. 1 meeting, tasking Holman and fellow commissioner Brian Webster to meet again with SGITP to hammer out particulars.

"There have been discussions leading up to this," said Holman, noting that the intended motion had represented his understanding of what SGITP was proposing. But, Holman said, while SGITP executive director Randy Cunningham indicated his discussions with accommodation providers showed support for the rural housing coordinator position, the housing voucher program and the additional allocation to the housing reserve, there was now some reluctance to fully commit the online portion of the tax — roughly half of what was close to \$700,000 in 2023 — to the reserve.

"They're not willing to commit to the same degree to all of the online funding going to housing there," said Holman. "They're wanting to control the funds, so aside from the contribution to the CRD's Rural Housing Program, all the other funds would be controlled by them — leaving

open the possibility that some of the online revenue could be used for marketing."

That left the agreement at a "fairly significant difference of opinion" at the moment, Holman said, noting that both local government and accommodation providers have to vote to renew the five-year plan.

"So if there's the prospect of either local government and/or the accommodation providers saying no, we're at a bit of an impasse right now," said Holman.

Southern Gulf Islands Electoral Area director Paul Brent, who attended the LCC meeting remotely, spoke in support of the SGITP generally, and said his area's community economic sustainability committee had been "very, very pleased" with the work the group did, particularly in its efforts to shift visitor demand away from the summertime and into shoulder and winter seasons.

"I have faith in the Tourism Partnership," said Brent. "I worry that we could put a stick in the spokes by asking them to do more than they're willing to do for starters, and doing that out of the gate before there's an appropriate negotiation."

Brent said he had questions about the revenue proportionality between Salt Spring and the other islands, citing a lack of data to support what those numbers should be. But Webster characterized the disagreement as less of an "impasse" and more of the way such back-and-forth is meant to play out.

"That's part of a negotiation, and I don't think they should be panicking, although time is going to get tight on us," said Webster. "But we've been trying to have this discussion for quite a few months, so if time gets tight, that's certainly not because the Local Community Commission didn't get around to dealing with it."

Webster noted that there are some jurisdictions — including some northern Gulf Islands — where 100 per cent of the tax goes toward housing.

"I think we need to stand up for our community, and make sure that with a renewal of the agreement that it's down in writing that the Tourism Partnership will continue to do what they've been doing of late," said Webster, "which is listening, cooperating, being flexible and thoughtful when dealing with the whole thing. That's awesome, let's put it down in writing to make sure it continues for five years."

Commissioner Gayle Baker noted the enthusiasm about the partnership she'd heard from members of the Salt Spring Island Chamber of Commerce, and agreed that holding off approving the five-year plan until the details were ironed out shouldn't be construed as negative.

"There's definitely a sea change going on, in terms of how the Chamber is approaching this," said Baker. "Each one of them has said that they're really excited about the Tourism Partnership."

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HARBOURS

CRD set to tackle unregulated mooring buoys

Authority confirmed by feds

BY ROBB MAGLEY
DRIFTWOOD STAFF

The Capital Regional District (CRD) has tagged the placement of unregulated private mooring buoys (PMBs) as the primary cause of the region's derelict boat problem — and notably, the federal government has apparently made clear it is within the regional body's authority to manage them.

That news became public during the CRD's Environmental Services Committee meeting Wednesday, Jan. 17, as staff reported back on options to reduce or eliminate issues associated with not only derelict boats but those moored in fragile near-shore waters around the region.

A small forum had been held Tuesday, Jan. 16, hosted jointly by MP Elizabeth May and MLA Adam Olsen with an attendee list that included Central Saanich mayor Ryan Windsor, Salt Spring Island electoral area director Gary Holman, Salt Spring trustee Laura Patrick, and Clean and Safe Harbours

Initiative (CASHI) proponent Glenn Stevens, according to people in the meeting.

CRD environmental protection senior manager Glenn Harris said he thought the group showed "consensus support" for a region-wide discussion, as well as talk of advocacy with provincial and federal levels of government. That support, coupled with priorities set by the Saanich Peninsula Harbours Environmental Action Service, brought the issue to the CRD committee.

The B.C. government has shown little interest in managing private buoys, according to officials. And while Transport Canada is largely responsible for the regulation and enforcement of PMBs, according to Harris, the agency takes action only in response to placements in navigation channels — and on "smaller" matters like colouring, marking or how close they are set to other buoys.

"The province has chosen not to regulate the placement of private mooring buoys on provincial seabeds, despite their ability to do so," said Harris. "So Transport Canada staff have confirmed that local governments can prohibit the placement of private mooring buoys

within their metes and bounds."

Harris said staff were suggesting local governments consider using their authority through zoning, land use and structure bylaws to either prohibit PMBs or regulate their number and placement — reducing the need for local governments to respond to incidents, and possibly addressing the "environmental safety and neighbourhood concerns expressed by the impacted communities and local governments."

Directors seemed to accept that the proliferation of long-term moored boats and the increase in derelict boats requiring a municipal response in bays and harbours throughout the region was indeed a direct result of the unregulated placement of PMBs, and voted to task staff with setting up a new workshop — this time, with authority clarified, to directly explore local government management options.

But long-held concern over the absence of the federal and provincial government in the issue bubbled up as board members took turns alternating expressions of relief they had some direction on authority in the matter with worries

over how to fund any management actions they might take.

"In my view, the origin of this issue was that senior governments simply abandoned the field, and [said] 'you deal with the problem,'" said Holman, noting that as governments like Central Saanich had earlier stepped in and asked for resources or help with liability insurance, there was "no support at all."

"So they [federal and provincial officials] need to be in the room — along with First Nations," he said of the planned policy workshop. "Some of them are interested in playing a role in stewarding, managing, maybe even an enforcement role."

Sooke mayor Maja Tait pointed out that in addition to problems previously discussed — derelict vessels, leaking oil and "black water" pollution from moored boats — her constituents had witnessed nighttime poaching.

"And a concern raised has been that when boats just appear, they drop anchor and they damage eelgrass," said Tait, "which is the place for salmon fry. It's another environmental impact — not just the black water and the vessel, but also the damage on the ocean bed."

Holman told fellow board members they needed to bear in mind the issue wasn't just related to the environment, but that it was — demonstrably, and particularly in the Gulf Islands — a housing one.

"I've heard estimates of up to 200 boats in Ganges Harbour," said Holman. "And what makes it a little more complicated is, it's not just about derelicts. You've got folks using these vessels of various kinds for housing."

A number of those are working ashore in their communities, Holman added, where housing options are few and affordability shrinking.

"We've got professionals living on boats in harbours, because that's the best or only alternative available to them," said Holman. "If you start imposing management restrictions — like you have to have insurance, holding tanks, et cetera — there's a number of boats, certainly in Ganges Harbour, that could not meet that standard. And there's a very serious secondary impact here that we really have to think through carefully."

The CRD board unanimously approved the scheduling of the policy workshop, with a future date to be announced.

ISLANDS TRUST

Bylaw 537 accessory dwelling unit plan passed BY LTC

New ADU map sent off for approval

BY ROBB MAGLEY
DRIFTWOOD STAFF

A bylaw meant to create a path for some Salt Spring properties to be allowed "legal" accessory dwelling units (ADUs) was read three times at one meeting this week, and is now on its way to the Islands Trust's Executive Committee for approval.

Salt Spring's Local Trust Committee (LTC) held a special electronic meeting Monday, Jan. 22, advancing Bylaw 537 — a downsized spiritual successor to trustees' last effort on ADUs, Bylaw 530 — without a public hearing. The plan establishes a map of island parcels where ADUs, such as secondary suites or cottage/garden suites, would be permitted. It is much like the most recent version of Bylaw 530, except that it was introduced — and notice given to the public — such that a first, second and third reading could all occur in one meeting.

The Local Government Act allows for trustees to skip holding a public hearing on proposed bylaws if they choose, so long as the proposals are consistent with an existing official community plan (OCP), which trustees — at least, most of them — and staff agree Bylaw 537 is. The Jan. 22 agenda did not include a live "town hall" public comment period, although trustee Laura Patrick said she felt much had been heard, particularly regarding Tsawout First Nation concerns on the original plan's scale possibly exceeding the island's "living capacity."

"I feel comfortable that we have more than addressed concerns that were raised," said Patrick. "This being a substantially scaled-back version, I think we've shown that we've taken it into account. So I am more than satisfied to move forward today with this bylaw, and I'm hopeful we will have a spot zoning process created in the future."

Trustees have asked staff to create a streamlined "spot zoning" process that would allow property owners outside the map boundaries to ask to be included, conceivably growing the scope incrementally. But trustee Jamie Harris remained unconvinced.

"This bylaw, as it is now, will not do anything to help us out with the housing crisis," said Harris, who suggested they proceed no further with the bylaw, opting instead to amend the OCP to fit the "original intent"

of the old Bylaw 530, as it would have involved far more parcels from the outset.

"I won't be debating anything else," said Harris. "I'll just be voting against everything [today]."

At all three readings — and at motions to indicate the LTC's belief that the bylaw is not contrary to the Trust's Policy Statement and to advance it the Executive Committee — Harris was the sole vote against.

Trustees had previously sought to have

Salt Spring, as a Local Trust Area (LTA), included under recent provincial legislation Bill 44, which could have outright prohibited a public hearing on housing matters such as ADUs. But officials at B.C.'s housing ministry declined a November LTC request to put the Salt Spring LTA under the same regulations as municipalities, with Minister of Housing Ravi Kahlon citing Salt Spring's "existing infrastructure capacity issues"

surrounding drinking water and waste disposal — as well as interests of local First Nations and the Trust's "preserve and protect" mandate.

"I think all of us recognize this is not the ultimate fix or solution for Salt Spring," said LTC chair Tim Peterson. "This is just one small step towards where things need to go."

The Islands Trust Executive Committee next meets Wednesday, Jan. 31.



Islands Trust

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- ↪ Agricultural Hall: 430 Fernhill Rd.
- ↪ Mayne Street Mall: Village Bay Rd.
- ↪ Fernhill Centre: Fernhill Rd.

SOUTH PENDER ISLAND

- ↪ South Pender Island Fire Hall: 8961 Gowlland Point Rd.
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SATURNA ISLAND

- ↪ Saturna Community Hall: East Point Rd.
- ↪ Saturna Recreation Centre: 104 Harris Rd.
- ↪ General Store Bulletin Boards
- ↪ Saturna Point Store

OPINION

2022 CCNA Awards
Gold - Best Editorial Page | Gold - Outstanding Community Service | Silver - Best Front Page
Silver - Best Local Editorial (Gail Sjuberg) | Silver - Best Local Cartoon (Dennis Parker)

2022 BCYCN Awards
Silver - Best All Round (for circulation Category C)
Silver - Community Service Award



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EDITORIAL

Help for housing

When it comes to seeing publicly subsidized housing built in our community, or any other, advocacy is key.

That was one takeaway from a recent visit by University of Toronto associate professor Alison Smith, an authority on issues of housing and homelessness, who spoke to a Jan. 14 Salt Spring Forum crowd.

Smith praised the federal government's National Housing Strategy, initiated in 2018, and the more recently announced Urban, Rural and Northern Indigenous Housing Strategy. After decades of inaction on the housing front, those steps acknowledge the critical role that senior governments play in ensuring its citizens are adequately housed. But Smith cautioned that it's one thing to make funding announcements and another for those funds to be translated into completed, habitable shelter.

THE ISSUE: Government housing funding

WE SAY: Citizens must press accountability

While the amount committed to the strategy initiated in 2018 keeps climbing, and the government has a "progress report" on its NHS website, exactly how many units have been completed is not easy to gauge. As of the end of September 2023, the site states \$38.89 billion in "funding commitments" have been made and 151,803 housing units created or funds committed to their creation. There is a critical difference between a funding commitment and units being created. For true accountability, the "created units" and "funding commitments" for them should be separated in their reporting.

Smith stressed in her presentation to islanders how it's "really easy" to make a funding announcement about supporting housing, and not difficult to get it into a budget, but not necessarily easy to get it out of the feds' bank account "and into the hands of the people who need it."

That's where focused advocacy comes into the picture. If public funds have been promised for a particular project, the funding agencies must be pressed to spend the money — responsibly, of course. The Capital Regional District has been taking a leadership role in creating public housing, with its recently announced plan to seek ratepayers authority to borrow \$85 million to build housing in the region the latest evidence of that. But provincial and federal dollars are also needed to complete the vision, along with advocacy from citizens to ensure those funds end up unlocking new housing doors.



We all need each other

BY JASON MOGUS

We all live together on this very small island, and as things get increasingly hairy out there in the world, it would be good if we could find better ways of working across our relatively small differences. In science fiction stories it's known not to shoot your laser inside a small spaceship, lest everyone suffer the consequences of a hole in the hull.

Case in point: recent (and fairly constant) articles submitted by organizers trying to sink the accessory dwellings unit (ADU) affordable housing bylaw continue to use extreme language to make the idea and those supporting it look far bolder and more sinister than they really are. While I respect the intellect, rhetorical powers and good intentions of these passionate fellow activists, these claims create a lot of alarm and confusion as to what's really going on. I'm not sure they would survive a peer review process either.

Nowhere that ADUs have been allowed has seen over a 10 per cent uptake across the housing stock. No developers are lobbying to build small cottages and suites. All water and other restrictions, as well as continued incredibly high building costs, will greatly limit the number of ADUs that might actually get built on Salt Spring.

To say with such certainty that ADUs will "double the population" and "unleash mass private development" when there is no credible evidence supporting either statement doesn't contribute to our community's understanding of complex policy issues. This black and white thinking harms community cohesion, and I'm not sure it helps us become more sustainable.

VIEWPOINT

The use of extreme language also maligns the reputations of the many people who are — like nearly every elected leader in Canada right now — working to address the incredibly unfair and painful housing reality thousands of our fellow community members struggle with, through no fault of their own other than being part of less lucky demographics.

Some may note I'm hardly one to preach on the topic of restraint. I've made some missteps myself on this topic in the past, by using words too harshly, creating unnecessary distance between those of us who would otherwise share most of our values if we were to go on a hike together in our beloved coastal rainforest.

Thanks to the wise counsel of some friends, I'm trying to learn one does effect social change differently in a small community. Perhaps the kinds of campaign tactics that work when fighting greedy corporations aren't appropriate when arguing nuance with your neighbour who was just over for tea last month, or who might be called on to help fix your frozen pipes tomorrow.

Those laser holes in the hull can suck out everyone's life support system.

Salt Spring has long been renowned for its smart and compassionate population. I would love to see a bit more restraint in our use of words and a bit more faith being placed in our fellow community members who dare to lead on complex issues, and not always assume subterfuge, worst case scenarios, and malintent. Can we disagree without taking it to such extremes?

The world is an increasingly scary place, and we really do all need each other on this tiny ship.

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ISLAND VOICES

LETTERS to the editor

Political football

Four months after Trust Council's "consensus" interpretation of the preserve and protect mandate, the Governance Committee, which includes both Salt Spring trustees, continues to create a smoke screen around the immensely consequential closed-door meeting of Sept. 26, 2023.

In an attempt to defuse a growing controversy, committee chair Judith Gedye has stated the interpretation "doesn't change policy." While that's technically true, Trust Council's own summary of the meeting says the "consensus" will be used "to build our strategic direction." This means it will guide development of the new Policy Statement (the master plan for the Gulf Islands)—and that could spell trouble for local ecosystems.

According to the summary, "unique amenities" are not unique at all. They are "broad-ranging and may include issues such as, but not limited to, housing, livelihoods, infrastructure and tourism." The natural environment, which has no voice of its own, will become a political football: "Where there is competition between those elements there must be a careful and reasoned balancing of the importance of preserving and protecting the Trust Area, and its unique amenities and environment."

Consider Salt Spring trustees' tacit support for an unpermitted kennel operation on land zoned Rural Watershed 1. Will these two trustees, one an ardent fan of "integrated solutions," the other a fierce opponent of "eco-radical solutions," engage in "a careful and reasoned balancing" when a rezoning application is received for this "essential service" which has now morphed into an intensively-logged encampment complete with trailers, port-a-potties and assorted vehicles and structures, setting a terrible example for other property owners?

Trustee Laura Patrick has long advocated for this type of ambiguous, directionless interpretation. When I asked her for details of the closed-door meeting she dodged all questions with this: "Once a vote is declared 'carried' or 'defeated', I am duty bound to accept

the outcome." (A similar email to Trust CAO Russ Hotsenpiller received no answer at all.)

Local politicians clearly cannot be trusted with the long-term protection of these islands. Please ask Trust Council (execadmin@islandstrust.bc.ca) to conduct public business in public and to prioritize environmental protection in the new Policy Statement.

The dynamics of destruction are fundamentally anthropogenic: property owners don't respect the rules, the regulatory agency doesn't enforce the rules, lobby groups pressure elected officials to change the rules who in turn neutralize the agency that makes the rules. And when this pattern is exposed, a cloud of secrecy descends.

FRANTS ATTORP,
SALT SPRING

Stats speak for themselves

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control, statistically, an unvaccinated person is 14 times more likely to die from Covid-19 than a bivalent vaccine recipient.

Also, since the start of the vaccination campaign on Dec. 14, 2020, the Public Health Agency of Canada received case-level vaccine history data for 2,457,576 COVID-19 cases aged five years or older.

Of these cases:

- 1,002,452 (40.8 per cent) were unvaccinated
- 794,145 (32.3 per cent) had completed their primary vaccine series
- 460,280 (18.7 per cent) had completed their primary vaccine series and had one additional dose
- 49,056 (2.0 per cent) had completed their primary vaccine series and had two or more additional doses.

PAUL MCELROY,
SALT SPRING

The month after Xmas

BY MIKE STACEY

*Twas a month after Christmas, here on the island
Most of us grumpy, a few were still smilin'.
Broken toys piled on the roadside with care
in hopes that the garbage man soon would be there.
The tree was all dried out, broken and scorched,
shedding its needles out on the porch.
Christmas lights hanging from homes far and near
just pull the plug, they'll still be there next year.
Santa was home again, at the North Pole,
thinking of stockings he'd filled up with coal.
The naughty list got longer all of the time,
from thievery, blackmail and white-collar crime.
Flying was much worse than it used to be,
he'd almost flown into an old-growth fir tree.
Cursing and swearing as he swerved around,
Why doesn't Scotty just cut that thing down?
Out Beaver Point way he'd started to choke,
Flying through thick clouds of legal pot smoke.
Holding his breath 'til he got away,
then one of the Akermans shot at his sleigh.
Clutching the reins he screamed at the deer
On Comet! On Blitzen! Get the hell out of here!!
Now he was home again, frightened and tired,
drinking Jack Daniels in front of the fire.
He planned to spend a few weeks by himself,
so he wouldn't go crazy and beat up the elves.
"Never again!" he quietly said.
"If it keeps up I might end up dead!"
"Good night to all, and I wish you good luck,
Next year I'll stay home, and I don't give a darn!"*

QUOTE OF THE WEEK:

"Horses are great teachers. Oh man, does it ever sound corny. But it's true, the lessons are coming in very unexpected ways."

NATASCHA WILLE, THREE GABLES FARM CO-OWNER WHO HAS RESCUED HORSES FROM THE U.S.

Riding around Salt Spring with the myth of the green machine

BY JOE STACEY

Shilo Zylbergold's column in the Dec. 27 issue about the holiday season and regifting got me to thinking (and chuckling of course) about how much of our society is driven on useless consumerism.

Ask yourself this: "Do I really need a new phone or electric car, whenever a new model comes out?" Or how about "Has the human species learned nothing about the effects of exploitation from history?" In what is now Canada, it started with the furry beaver trade, then cod, whale oil, coal, timber, herring, salmon, crude oil, and the list goes on. What's next? I know, it's lithium! All this to feed the green machine. It did build our nation, but it hasn't been without its consequences, many of which we are still paying for today. Some call it progress, but what are we progressing towards?

Whatever happened to respecting the land (and oceans) that feed you? I remember when I was in school, we had "REDUCE, RE-USE, RECYCLE" drilled into our heads. Notice how recycle is the last option? It seems the modus operandi has always actually been "PRODUCE, ABUSE, NEW CYCLE."

I wish people would step back and realize the potential environmental damage that will be caused by building more lithium mines, power plants, extra gas, or wells of oil, that would be needed to accomplish this shift to more electric energy. We need to remember that electricity doesn't just magically appear from a hole in the wall, and that some natural resources are a finite thing.

According to the leading electric car maker, we will need to triple our electricity output in order to achieve an "all-electric" society. It will never be truly all electric, as there will still be some oil and gas, unless we as a society are prepared to give up a lot of things, including jobs. I feel we will need to more than triple the output because by the time that happens, we will all be glued to our electricity-gobbling phones/computers, and will need AI bots to do all the skilled jobs that the younger generations didn't learn because it was easier to make money selling pictures of their feet online.

Now while it is true that electric cars are quite clean in the local environment in which they oper-

GUEST COLUMN

ate, as a whole, they are damaging to the planet. This is very easy to overlook when the damage isn't in your backyard. Kind of like gas and oil. I say "the" planet, because it's not ours. We as humans are not the only species here, but I think that is often forgotten, in the name of capital gains.

If you're going to buy a new electric car with honest, hard-earned, unborrowed money because you need it, and like the tech, that's your choice, and you have that freedom. But if you don't need one, and you are buying it with borrowed money, on the pretense of it being better for the planet, I believe you are being misled by certain groups pushing a new agenda/resource.

It seems most things built today have a planned obsolescence. It's kind of like Grandma's blender from 1945, that could still blend up the neighbourhood Tomcat that has been spraying on your shoes, but most blenders built last year couldn't shave the hair of said pussy.

Maybe our society should be focusing on building/buying quality, long-lasting, repairable products. The higher incomes would use the new, and the lower incomes would use the old, just like it is today, and has always been.

When you see my gas-sipping, 34-year-old truck driving by, just know that it will still be operational long after your electric car battery has failed, deeming it uneconomical to repair, but that's OK, you can just recycle it and buy a new one, and claim you are doing your part for the environment.

Before you label me "far right," "anti-electric," "pro oil" or any other polarizing name, just know that I am none of these, as labels create division, which leads to wars. Maybe we should all be "bi-polar." Wait a minute, that's not a very nice label. We are all just "human" and that's a label I think we can all agree on. I definitely support clean air, clean water, healthy soil and critical thinking. Sometimes it feels like there are far too many sheep on the animal farm, or, well, maybe you'll figure it out sooner rather than later.

It seems to always boil down to

power, profit and the need to keep up with the Joneses. This at the cost of what we actually need to survive. Life isn't meant to be all peaches and cream.

I will thank my local community and my parents for teaching me the values behind, and joy created in, repurposing or rebuilding what others consider to be trash. I used to be ashamed, like I was a lesser being, until I realized it's those who abuse and take their mother for granted that should be ashamed.

So do your mother a favour: support local businesses, repair or repurpose what has already been built, grow or buy food that is grown/hunted ethically, and don't worry so much about socio-economic status. I have been learning this since 1984.

Now don't just take my word on any of this. I encourage you to get out there and do some thorough, open-minded research, and THEN tell me I am wrong. Remember, we are all in the same boat together, and in the end, does it really matter what powers it? It does if once way out at sea, we are all led to one side.

The writer is a long-time islander.



PHOTO BY COLLEEN SHANTZ

EVERYBODY READS THE DRIFTWOOD: The Shantz family's snowman at Kingfisher Cove holds last week's newspaper, which saw challenges to delivery due to the inclement weather. This week's issue should be delivered to retail outlets and mailboxes on time, but the snowman may not be around to read it.

Groundwater needs protected forest cover

BY ALIX HODSON DEGGAN

Will there be enough water today? That's the question many island residents ask themselves as they turn on their taps during the dry season. They worry how climate change, ever-increasing development, and degradation of recharge areas will affect their groundwater supply. Now, more than ever, we are seeing the adverse effects of a growth economy and outdated, unsustainable forest management practices.

The importance of maintaining forest cover is clearly explained by Herb Hammond in his recent webinar: Forests for Water or Timber: A Clearcut Problem. The award-winning forester provides an in-depth look at the vital connection between groundwater and trees, and explains how trees are the water conservation heroes of our ecosystems.

The process begins with drop-lets of water. Rain falls on the canopy where needles and leaves intercept and store water. The more leaves and needles, the more interception and water storage there will be. This means big trees with large canopies are essential for capturing water.

All parts of the forest play a role. Even decaying wood serves as a water storage and filtration system. Along with other decaying forest vegetation it provides a fertile foundation for new trees and future forests. Intact riparian ecosystems collect the energy that comes down the slopes and slowly release it into water courses.

Healthy watersheds require the composition, structure and function of an intact forest. Loss of water interception, storage and filtration results in rapid runoff and increased evaporation. Roads interrupt the downward movement of water and change dispersed flow to concentrated flow, while increased surface runoff causes erosion and creates perfect conditions for landslides and flooding.

Unhealthy watersheds are created through industrial forest management practices such

as clear cutting and the application of herbicides. Further degradation occurs when sewage run-off containing toxic chemicals mixes with water courses.

Degraded watersheds support fewer plants and animals and generally have reduced biodiversity. As holistic foresters like Herb Hammond know, a watershed can be as small as a dimple in the Earth's surface, or, when all the dimples are joined, as large as the Earth.

Ecosystems are not planned. They are a living fabric woven together with flowing water and water drops. Nature knows what it is doing and there are no geometric formulas, no hierarchies and no boundaries — ecosystems are alive. Hammond encourages a complete systemic change in forestry practices, and shares this sobering thought: If humans continue to make decisions

If humans continue to make decisions based on short-term expedience, future generations will face tremendous difficulties.

generations will face tremendous difficulties.

Last year was the driest since 1985 in southwestern B.C. According to the government of Canada, "there are growing concerns regarding the province's vulnerability to drought and wildfires in the upcoming year."

On Gabriola, we have known about falling water levels for years. Hydrology studies show the main aquifer to be at a critical level. Yet we continue to approve more development in our water recharge areas. The result is fewer trees where they are needed most.

This fragile ecosystem, this tiny outcrop of rock we call home, is dependent on groundwater to sustain its unique flora and fauna. All the trees on our water-stressed islands are considered critical to the health of our natural environment; they help create the conditions needed to support life.

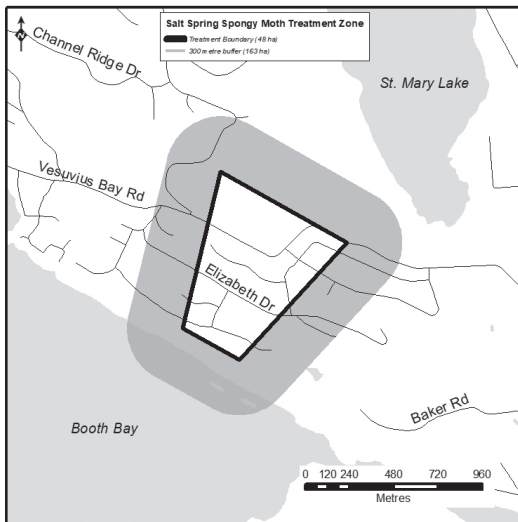
For more information on trees and groundwater, go to info@friendsofthegulfislands.ca.

The writer is a Gabriola Island resident.

Application for Pesticide Use

PESTICIDE USE PERMIT APPLICATION # 738-0038-24-24

Applicant: British Columbia Ministry of Forests, 200-10470 152nd Street, Surrey, B.C., V3R 0Y3, Phone: 1 866 917-5999



The Ministry of Forests has applied to the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy for a permit to use Btk (*Bacillus thuringiensis var. Kurstaki*), commercial formulation Foray 48B, to eradicate an establishing spongy moth (*Lymantria dispar*; formerly referred to as gypsy moth) population in a 48-hectare parcel in the Vesuvius area of Salt Spring Island (see map). Three aerial applications are planned in each area between April 1 and June 30, 2024. Btk has been approved for the control of spongy moth larvae in Canada since 1961.

Copies of the permit application and map of the treatment area may be viewed at gov.bc.ca/spongymoth/news. Check the website regularly for information on upcoming virtual information sessions.

A person wishing to contribute information about the treatment sites for the evaluation of this permit application must send copies of the information to both the applicant at the address above, or by email at flnrgypsymothinfo@gov.bc.ca, and the administrator under the *Integrated Pest Management Act* at Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy, Suite 200-10470 152 Street, Surrey, B.C., V3R 0Y3, or by email at ENVICIA@gov.bc.ca, within 30 days of the publication of this notice.



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Roses

• A bouquet of ivory roses to Lynn Vanderwekken, who drove out Thursday, on her lunch break, to deliver my medication to me! It was very much appreciated! M.P.

• A Kubota tractor bucket full of roses to my neighbour Eric, who voluntarily cleared the snow from my super-long and steep-in-spots driveway not once but twice during last week's snow events. It not only made it possible to drive up and down the driveway via 4X4 but it reduced the chances of falling on slippery slush and ice. Much appreciated! G.S.



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BALTIMORE CONSORT



PHOTO COURTESY BALTIMORE CONSORT
 Four of seven Baltimore Consort members seen in a past performance. The musical group, formed in 1980 to perform music of Shakespeare's time, brings Angel's Wede: Music for Mary, Queen of Scots to ArtSpring this Friday, Jan. 26 at 7:30 p.m.

CONCERT PREVIEW

Symphony showcases formidable talent



PHOTO COURTESY VICTORIA SYMPHONY

Victoria Symphony music director and conductor Christian Kluxen works with symphony musicians. Kluxen and special guests will perform at ArtSpring on the afternoon of Feb. 3.

Virtuoso pianist David Jalbert among guests

SUBMITTED BY KIRSTEN BOLTON FOR ARTSPRING

The beloved Victoria Symphony returns to ArtSpring for a Feb. 3 Saturday matinee entitled *Transfigured Night*, an early, overtly romantic program with musical echoes of Brahms, Wagner, Mahler and Richard Strauss.

Taking the helm is dynamic music director and charismatic conductor Christian Kluxen, now in his seventh season with the Victoria Symphony, sixth season as chief conductor of the Arctic Opera and Philharmonic, and first season as the principal guest conductor of the Turku Philharmonic.

Born in 1981 in Copenhagen to Danish-German parents, Kluxen has a natural affinity towards the Germanic and Scandinavian repertoire, particularly the works of Beethoven, Brahms, Richard Strauss, Nielsen, and Sibelius. He is largely regarded as one of the most exciting conductors to emerge from Scandinavia.

In this program, the strings of the Victoria Symphony are showcased in three works, beginning with a familiar, high-spirited piece by a 16-year-old Mozart. Then Shostakovich's

sparkling wit, sly humour and love of musical parody are displayed in his energetic Concerto No. 1 for piano, trumpet and strings.

Finally, audiences are asked to step out from the darkness into the light to have their view of Schoenberg's music transformed with the title movement *Transfigured Night (Verklärte Nacht, Op. 4)*.

Spotlighted within the symphony will be international virtuoso pianist David Jalbert, with his remarkable sweep, confidence and sensitivity. He was named by CBC to be among the 15 best Canadian pianists of all time.

Jalbert is joined by Saskatoon-born Ryan Cole on principal trumpet, who has been with the Victoria Symphony since 2012 and frequently appears with the Orchestre symphonique de Montréal.

From its first performance in The Empress Hotel in 1941, Victoria Symphony is now one of British Columbia's largest performing arts organizations with nearly 60 main season concerts, education concerts, summer concerts and performances in smaller communities. The Victoria Symphony performs repertoire from classical to pops, opera to ballet, and new music.

Tickets are at tickets.artspring.ca, the box office or 250-537-2102. Angel program tickets (\$15) become available this Friday.

RECITAL

All Saints hosts Ed Norman



PHOTO COURTESY MUSIC MAKERS
 Organist Ed Norman, who performs at All Saints by-the-Sea on the afternoon of Saturday, Jan. 27.

Organist shares classical and contemporary pieces

SUBMITTED BY MUSIC MAKERS

Music Makers of the Anglican Parish of Salt Spring Island presents a recital by internationally acclaimed organist Edward Norman at All Saints by-the-Sea on Saturday, Jan. 27 at 2 p.m.

Norman will be playing a program of classical and contemporary organ works by Bach, Haydn, Mozart, Franck and Stamm on the church's wonderful four-manual Rodgers hybrid (digital/pipe) organ.

Norman studied at the Royal College of Music, London, with Osborne Peasgood and Harold Darke. There he gained several performance awards. After emigrating to Canada, he studied with Hugh McLean at UBC, and later also taught the organ there.

He has performed widely in Canada and the U.K. and in Poland and Germany. He has appeared in the Vancouver International Festival, the Spoleto Festival in Charleston, S.C. and twice with the YNSO in Tokyo. More recently he has given recitals at Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge and at the National Museum of Wales in Cardiff. Over many years he has performed with the VSO (including maestro Bramwell Tovey's farewell tour) and has appeared regularly as organist at the bi-annual International Kathaumixw Choral Festival in Powell River. Over the years he has been heard frequently on CBC radio as recitalist and accompanist, and for 10 years was a music producer with CBC radio in Vancouver.

Norman has held several major church music positions across North America, and now he and his wife Susan live on Galiano Island, where they moved four years ago. Norman continues to perform on and off the island, most recently appearing in the Monday Night Silent Movie series being presented at Vancouver's Orpheum, in conjunction with Vancouver Civic Theatres.

Tickets are available at the door for \$20 and \$10 for students.

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OPERA

Met debut of modern Carmen at ArtSpring

Opera setting moves to present-day American southwest

SUBMITTED BY KIRSTEN BOLTON FOR ARTSPRING

The classical, sensual phenomenon that is George Bizet's 1875 opera Carmen gets a creative new world makeover by acclaimed English director Carrie Cracknell, making her Met debut. ArtSpring's popular MET: LIVE IN HD broadcast brings the sweeping drama to the screen this Saturday morning, Jan. 27.

Originally set in 19th-century Spain, the story of the power struggle and downfall of soldier Don José by the seductive wiles of the fiery gypsy Carmen moves its action to the present-day American southwest amid a band of human traffickers.

The tobacco factory of the original setting is now envisioned as the rear loading docks of a modern cigarette plant of dubious intent, surrounded by chain link fences and monitored by armed security guards. The



PHOTO COURTESY MET OPERA

Mezzo-soprano Aigul Akhmetshina and tenor Piotr Beczala in a scene from Bizet's Carmen, written in 1875, which has been transported in time and place for a new production airing in the MET: LIVE IN HD series this Saturday morning at ArtSpring.

bullfight backdrop of the classic finale is here reimaged as a rodeo spectacle, complete with jumping clowns wearing garish costumes and a stadium of fans

cheering on the macabre scene. Despite the modernized setting, the political struggles, gender and power dynamics, love and sexuality, and vio-

lence all still stand, albeit coming through in a different form and world. The music, however, remains intact, including one of opera's most famous songs, Habenera, in which Carmen sings about the untameable nature of love.

Young Russian mezzo-soprano Aigul Akhmetshina's silken voice leads a powerhouse quartet of stars in the touchstone role of the irresistible femme fatale, alongside tenor Piotr Beczala as Carmen's lover Don José. Soprano Angel Blue is the devoted Micaëla and bass-baritone Kyle Ketelsen is the swaggering Escamillo. Daniele Rustioni conducts Bizet's heart-pounding score.

Carmen is sung in French, with subtitles. As always, quiche, cookies and coffee are on sale at intermission, an opportunity to mingle and share opinions about the experimental production.

The opera comes with a flashing light warning in Act 2 for those who are sensitive.

Tickets are now on sale in the box office or online for \$25 adult, \$20 senior and \$15 youth.

Victoria Symphony ArtSpring Presents 25th ANNIVERSARY

Sat Feb 3
2:30pm
\$35 | \$5

artspring.ca
tickets.artspring.ca
250.537.2102

IF YOU HAVE AN EVENT FOR THE EVENTS CALENDAR EMAIL: news@gulfislandsdriftwood.com

what's on this week

Wed. Jan. 24	Fri. Jan. 26	Sat. Jan. 27	Tues. Jan. 30
<p>ACTIVITIES</p> <p>SOLD OUT. Best of the Fests: Physician, Heal Thyself. A Salt Spring Film Festival presentation at ArtSpring. 7:30 p.m.</p> <p>Bridge. In the library program room. 12:45 to 4:15 p.m.</p> <p>Music Bingo. Moby's Pub. 7:30 p.m.</p>	<p>LIVE ENTERTAINMENT</p> <p>Karaoke. At the Legion. 7:30 p.m.</p> <p>Fridays With DJ Boomtown. Moby's Pub. 9 p.m. til 12:30 a.m.</p> <p>ACTIVITIES</p> <p>Neighbourhood Story Time. Stories for young ones read by community members in the library's children's area every Friday from 11 to 11:30 a.m.</p> <p>ASK Salt Spring. Salt Spring's Tom Toynbee talks about island history as the guest in the Transition Salt Spring/ Restorative Justice room at SIMS. 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.</p> <p>Youth Games & Chess Club. For ages 9 to 13. Library children's area. 1 to 4 p.m.</p> <p>Friday Game Night. For ages 13 to 19. Library program room. 7 p.m.</p>	<p>LIVE ENTERTAINMENT</p> <p>Sky Lambourne & Friends. At The Local Pub. 6 p.m.</p> <p>Old Times Cafe. Open stage at Fulford Hall annex. 7 to 11 p.m.</p> <p>Beaver Point Hall Community Dance & Potluck. An evening of contra dancing and potluck to the music of Na Mara. Beaver Point Hall. Potluck at 6:30 p.m., dancing starts at 7 p.m.</p> <p>Doug and the Buds. Legion. 7:30 p.m.</p> <p>Sun. Jan. 28</p> <p>LIVE ENTERTAINMENT</p> <p>Blues Jam. At the Legion. 3 to 6 p.m.</p> <p>ACTIVITIES</p> <p>Grand Opening of Salt Spring Island Public Library's Indigenous Learning Area. Doors at 12:30 p.m.; ceremony at 1 p.m. Please RSVP to cdick@saltspringlibrary.com or by calling 250-537-4666 ext. 229.</p> <p>Mon. Jan. 29</p> <p>LIVE ENTERTAINMENT</p> <p>Vetta Presents Music of the Heart. Piano trio program of music by Prokofiev, Babajanian and Brahms presented by Vetta Chamber Music. ArtSpring. 2:30 p.m.</p>	<p>ACTIVITIES</p> <p>Trivia Tuesday. At Moby's Pub. 7:30 p.m.</p> <p>CINEMA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wonka runs Friday-Saturday, Jan. 26-27 at 7 p.m. and Sunday, Jan. 28 at 3 p.m. • Monty Python and the Holy Grail 48 ½ Anniversary runs Sunday, Jan. 28 to Tuesday, Jan. 30 at 7 p.m. <p>See thefritz.ca for more movie info.</p> <p>ART EXHIBITIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This Is Us, an exhibition by a group of artists of the Yellow Submarine, is at the Salt Spring Public Library Community Program Room through Jan. 29. • Salt Spring Photography Club exhibits in the ArtSpring lobby until Jan. 31. • Anna McCole shows photographs of sandstone at Country Grocer's cafe through January. • Natascha Wille exhibits Faces of Forgotten Horses at the Salt Spring Coffee Cafe. See story on page 12 of this issue of the paper.
<p>Thur. Jan. 25</p> <p>LIVE ENTERTAINMENT</p> <p>Open Mic & Jam. At the Legion. 7:30 p.m.</p> <p>ACTIVITIES</p> <p>Mother Goose. For babies, young children (0-4 years) and their parents/caregivers. Salt Spring Public Library. 10 to 11 a.m.</p> <p>Library Book Club. Bring a non-fiction book of your choice. Library program room. 1 p.m. Info: bookclub@saltspringlibrary.com.</p> <p>Thursday Night Bingo. A Rotary Club of Salt Spring Island event at Meaden Hall. Doors at 6 p.m. Games from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. Funds benefit the island's food bank.</p>	<p>Sat. Jan. 27</p> <p>LIVE ENTERTAINMENT</p> <p>Met Opera: Carmen. Live in HD presentation at ArtSpring. 9:55 a.m.</p> <p>Organist Ed Norman. Internationally acclaimed musician at All Saints Church. 2 p.m.</p> <p>The Selkies of Salt Spring. Female vocal trio performs at Salt Spring Centre of Yoga. Doors at 3:30 p.m. with tea served. Music at 4 p.m.</p>	<p>Fri. Jan. 26</p> <p>LIVE ENTERTAINMENT</p> <p>ArtSpring Presents: Baltimore Consort. Acclaimed early music group brings Angel's We'de: Music of Mary, Queen of Scots concert to ArtSpring. 7:30 p.m.</p>	<p>Friday Game Night for ages 13-19 Friday, Jan. 26, 7 p.m. SS Library Program Room</p> <p>THRIFTY FOODS Ganges, Mouat's Centre 7:30am to 9pm Customer Service 250-537-1522</p>

ISLAND LIFE

GUEST SPEAKERS

Academic expert illuminates housing crisis

Alison Smith speaks at sold-out Salt Spring Forum event

BY GAIL SJUBERG
DRIFTWOOD STAFF

One of Canada's leading academics on housing, homelessness, inequality and social protection gave a capacity crowd at Mahon Hall a truck full of building materials for understanding our country's housing crisis at a Salt Spring Forum event on Jan. 14.

Alison Smith, an associate professor in the faculty of political science at the University of Toronto, said her interest in the issue of homelessness was sparked by a field trip to Vancouver's Downtown Eastside while she was a masters student under Michael Byers, Salt Spring Forum co-founder and UBC political science professor. Byers also moderated the event.

Smith detailed how the loss of federal government funding for housing in the 1990s and lack of leadership at the provincial government level across Canada was largely responsible for the state we see today.

"This is what happens when you try to create the conditions for the market to develop an inclusive, equitable, fair housing market. It doesn't happen without senior government investment, with all of their resources, and we haven't had that for a long time," she said.

Smith contrasted that with Finland's situation, which has longstanding experience with ensuring all of its citizens are housed.

"It's always held up as a country that has ended homelessness; the only country that has a really long-term sustainable response to all different forms of homelessness," she said, explaining that "about



PHOTO BY GAIL SJUBERG

Salt Spring Forum co-founder and UBC political science professor Michael Byers proudly introduces his former student, Alison Smith, who is now a University of Toronto associate professor, at a discussion on the Canada-wide housing crisis.

20 years ago they responded really quickly when they saw increasing housing insecurity, not just in the big city of Helsinki but elsewhere."

Smith said Finland has advantages in tackling the problem by having a smaller population, a unitary governance structure without provincial governments — which makes policy implementation easier — and a more generous welfare state. Finland has much more social housing, prioritizes early intervention and has solid information about what kind of housing is needed.

She said someone coming to Canada from Finland would tell us, "It doesn't have to be like this. We've got some roadmaps for what can be done differently."

The federal Liberal government's National Housing Strategy, pledging more than \$82 billion in funding over a 10-year period from 2018 to 2028, is laudable, she

said, but there are concerns about if and how the money will be spent.

"It needs to be going to the communities and to the Indigenous-led organizations and municipalities and the housing providers that have the expertise and know what needs to be done and how to do it."

Smith said the current B.C. NDP government is "the clear innovator, the clear leader" in Canada in trying to tackle the lack of housing, with other provincial governments watching how it plays out.

"This provincial government is doing more certainly today, and historically, than any province has done in terms of trying to intervene in the housing market," she said.

When asked by audience members what people could do at the local level, Smith stressed the importance of advocating to all levels of government to take

measures needed and to ensure that announced funding translates into housing units where and for whom they are needed.

"There are a lot of complexities, but at the end of the day, it's actually frustratingly simple what it is that needs to be done . . . ultimately, it's a tremendously reasonable thing to ask for everyone to have access to the type of home that they would like to live in, to have some type of choice in terms of where they're living and to make sure that that's safe. That's not asking too much."

Forum event tickets sold out several days in advance, attesting to local interest in the subject. People who have been advocating for local housing solutions and people living outdoors were among those in the crowd. They also set up a warming space outside the hall.

Smith is the author of *Multiple Barriers: The Multilevel Governance of Homelessness in Canada*.

For more reading on the issue, Smith recommended Gregory Suttor's book called *Still Renovating: A History of Canadian Social Housing Policy*. She also pointed to David Wachsmuth, Canada Research Chair in Urban Governance at McGill University, as the expert on the impacts of short-term rental platforms such as Airbnb.

SUSTAINABILITY

First local Repair Café set for Feb. 3

Transition Salt Spring event at the library

SUBMITTED BY TRANSITION SALT SPRING

Wondering what to do with a malfunctioning toaster, a non-functional stereo, or a moth-hole-ridden sweater? Don't throw them away just yet! Transition Salt Spring is thrilled to announce the launch of Salt Spring's very first Repair Café, to be held at the Salt Spring Library Community Room on Saturday, Feb. 3 from 10:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

A team of dedicated volunteer repair experts will be on-site, offering their skills to facilitate free-of-charge repairs (though donations are greatly appreciated). Tools and materials will also be provided, making it a convenient one-stop solution for those looking to revive their broken items. Attendees are encouraged to bring in anything from toasters, lamps and hair dryers to clothes, toys and crockery — virtually anything that needs fixing.

The Repair Café operates on a first-come, first-served basis, with a one-broken-item limit per person. If time allows, additional items may be addressed after everyone has had their initial item fixed. Join us for a day of skill-sharing with community fixers and learn from experienced experts.

Transition Salt Spring aims to contribute to the reduction of waste in our local community through this initiative. According

to Morgan Fraser, Transition Salt Spring's climate action coach, we discard so many things we own that have a broken part. "Some of those could easily be used again with a simple repair. Repair Café seeks to change this mindset," she said.

Additionally, Repair Café aims to foster new connections between neighbours and showcase the wealth of knowledge and practical skills within the community. Often there are inter-generational links and knowledge sharing between the fixing volunteers and people who visit the repair cafe.

"Repairing things together benefits our community — strengthening our neighbourhood connections and island resiliency," said Fraser.

Fraser added that beyond the environmental benefits, repairs can save money and resources, ultimately helping minimize CO2 emissions and material waste.

Originating in Amsterdam in 2009, the Repair Café concept was developed by Martine Postma, a journalist/publicist. In 2010, she founded the Repair Café International Foundation, providing support to local groups worldwide wishing to initiate their own Repair Café, now including Salt Spring Island. The CRD Waste Reduction Grant has helped Transition Salt Spring's ability to make this first Repair Café happen on Salt Spring Island.

Transition Salt Spring intends to organize regular Repair Cafés on the island starting with the Feb. 3 event.

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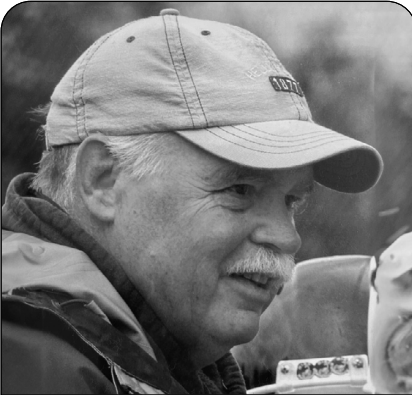
DAY	TIME	METRES	FEET	DAY	TIME	METRES	FEET
24	612	3.5	11.5	28	755	3.4	11.2
	1118	3	9.8		1344	2.5	8.2
	1404	3.1	10.2		1716	2.7	8.9
	2214	0.4	1.3		27	0.9	3
25	645	3.5	11.5	29	812	3.4	11.2
	1153	2.9	9.5		1424	2.3	7.5
	1453	3.1	10.2		1814	2.6	8.5
	2250	0.4	1.3		55	1.2	3.9
26	713	3.5	11.5	30	827	3.4	11.2
	1228	2.8	9.2		1503	2.1	6.9
	1540	3	9.8		1925	2.4	7.9
	2325	0.5	1.6		123	1.5	4.9
27	736	3.5	11.5	31	843	3.3	10.8
	1306	2.7	8.9		1542	1.8	5.9
	1626	2.9	9.5		2057	2.3	7.5
	2356	0.7	2.3				

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Obituaries



Douglas Herbert Mitchell

July 14th, 1942 – December 21st, 2023

Doug passed away on December 21st, 2023, after a lengthy illness. He had a full life, accomplishing many goals along the way, and he influenced the lives of his students and players while teaching and coaching.

One of his life goals was to play football in the CFL, the same as his older brother. He started his seven-year football career in 1968 and retired in 1974 having played on two winning Grey Cup teams (one with Hamilton and one with Montreal), and as a rookie was on the sidelines with Hamilton for another.

While playing football he taught high school and then, after leaving football, began a career coaching at the university level, first at Mount Allison University and then at the University of Toronto, before returning to his roots and a successful high school coaching career. Eventually retiring, he and his wife moved to Salt Spring Island and opened a clothing store, Ganges Garment Company, closing it after 14 1/2 years. He enjoyed meeting people and this was a perfect setting for him. As life slowed for him he still persevered on the golf course and his family appreciated the care shown him by his fellow golfers.

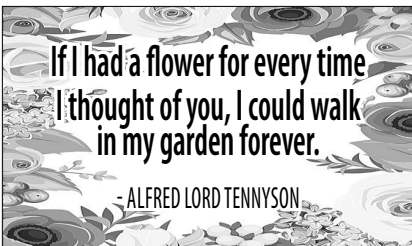
Doug emigrated from England when he was four years old and grew up in Windsor Ontario where he and his wife met when they were both in high school. They were married for 57 years.

He is survived by his wife Diana, three children, Christina (Matt), Stacy (Michael) and Todd (Racheal), two grandchildren, Michelle and Mackenzie, brother Bill and several nieces and nephews. He was predeceased by his parents Nelly and Fred, and by his brother Michael.

Doug's outgoing personality created strong bonds in all facets of his life. He had connections across the country, whether an athlete, a coach or a fellow golfer, but the centre of his life was his family. He celebrated their successes and encouraged them when things weren't going too smoothly. He was passionate about his life and always gave a hundred percent to whatever he did. His passing leaves a big hole in their lives.

Thank you to the home care workers for their care while he was still at home, and to Dr. Kalf, the staff of Lady Minto Hospital and the Extended Care Unit for the care he was given over the last months, and to Dr. Crichton, family doctor for several years.

A celebration of his life will be planned for a later date.



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WEEK OF JANUARY 21 TO 27, 2024
THE LUCKIEST SIGNS THIS WEEK:
LEO, VIRGO AND LIBRA

- ARIES**
If you witness a strange situation, discuss it with those close to you. They'll help you sort out your thoughts. Your friends will tend to confide in you, and you'll lend them a sympathetic ear.
- TAURUS**
You'll be struck by the urge to renovate your space and rearrange the furniture. You'll also explore the possibility of buying a house and moving, especially if you feel too cramped in your current home.
- GEMINI**
The stars have aligned, and it's time to act! You'll react quickly and confidently in uncertain situations. In your social media activity, one of your comments will attract considerable attention.
- CANCER**
You must take time to recharge your batteries; your health depends on it. You could commit to someone close to you, with whom you'll share some incredibly memorable times.
- LEO**
You can't escape your responsibilities or ignore your obligations. Your presence is required! To have an active social life, you must organize and plan activities that get everyone on board.
- VIRGO**
You'll have a lot of responsibilities, and many people will be counting on you. It might be a good idea to dedicate some time to getting everything done; you'll be easily distracted this week.
- LIBRA**
Making all your dreams come true requires meticulous organization and unshakeable determination. You must make adjustments to achieve your personal and professional goals.
- SCORPIO**
You could find yourself in a worrying situation. It's essential to focus on your priorities. If you're artistic, you'll be inspired to create a work that will set you apart and create a sensation.
- SAGITTARIUS**
You'll alternate between having a routine and going with the flow. Although you're not always easy to understand, you're trustworthy. You may have to weigh the pros and cons in a specific situation.
- CAPRICORN**
Cleaning up your home and office will help you see the bigger picture. It's important to get enough rest to prevent your immune system from weakening this winter.
- AQUARIUS**
You'll perform a heroic act, such as helping someone in need. Even if you just lend someone a listening ear, they'll be eternally grateful.
- PISCES**
You'll spend more time at home, perhaps because one of your children needs you. The prospect of working from home could come up, and you'll enjoy the comfort of being in your own environment.

RCMP REPORT

Increase in calls, impaired driver stops in 2023

Salt Spring detachment submits end-of-year report

BY SALT SPRING RCMP
CONTRIBUTED ARTICLE

In the fourth quarter of 2023, Salt Spring Island RCMP responded to 646 calls for service, for a total volume of 2,775 calls for the year, up from 2,747 in 2022.

For the period of Oct. 1 to Dec. 31, 2023, SSI RCMP averaged seven calls per day, issued 85 violation tickets (traffic, liquor, etc.), and gave out 195 traffic warnings. Police also conducted 423 foot patrols, 165 licensed premises checks (bar walks) and 19 “check-stops” for potential traffic violations and impaired drivers. Six firearms offences were investigated in this fourth quarter, along with five sex-related offences and 55 mental health-related calls.

In all of 2023, SSI RCMP issued over 1,400 violation tickets and warnings, conducted more than 1,500 foot patrols and carried out over 400 licensed premises checks (bar walks).

Impaired driving continues to be a concern for Salt Spring RCMP and the residents of Salt Spring Island. Impaired driving is enforced in British Columbia pursuant to the Province of British Columbia’s Immediate Roadside Driving Prohibitions (IRP) and with the Criminal Code of Canada in more serious examples, or in instances of repeat offenders. In 2022, SSI RCMP stopped 24 impaired drivers, resulting in various 24-hour, three-day, seven-day or 90-day driver’s licence suspensions and vehicle impoundments. In contrast, in 2023 SSI RCMP stopped 78 impaired drivers, averaging 1.5 impaired drivers per week.

It is not clear whether the increase in impaired drivers being caught is the result of more people drinking and driving, or as a result of an increase in enforcement by Salt Spring RCMP. Regardless, police will continue their ongoing traffic enforcement and commitment to road safety on Salt Spring. Look for more “checkstops” in the future!

Some of the calls for the fourth quarter are detailed below:

October 2023

- SSI RCMP responded to a person threatening to burn their own house down; the situation was determined to be a mental health-related concern as opposed to criminal intent. The person was transported to Lady Minto Hospital for further assessment.

- While on foot patrol in downtown Ganges, police located a person with multiple outstanding warrants from Salt Spring RCMP and Sidney/North Saanich RCMP; the person was arrested and transported off Salt Spring where they were held in jail until their court date.

- RCMP responded to a request for police attendance to stop a banned person from entering a business; the person was located by police, found to be intoxicated and with outstanding warrants, and was subsequently arrested and taken to jail.

- SSI RCMP were requested to assist with a person who was depressed and had a plan to kill themselves. Police spoke with the individual, de-escalated the situation and transported the person to hospital for psychiatric assessment.

- SSI RCMP responded to a report of a missing youth; the youth was later safely located by police.

- Police were called by a person reporting two-thirds of their stick of butter was missing and they believed it was taken by an unknown person who broke into their house; no evidence of break-in was found and police closed the investigation.

- SSI RCMP were asked by Shawnigan Lake RCMP to assist with a domestic violence assault that occurred near Shawnigan Lake but the parties involved fled to Salt Spring; over a period of days, police finally located the suspect and arrested them, later releasing them on conditions and an upcoming court date.

November 2023

- An impaired driver who, while driving, had struck another vehicle, was located by police and arrested. A 90-day Immediate Roadside Prohibition (IRP) was issued result-

ing in various fines, the loss of their driver’s licence and their vehicle impounded for 30 days.

- While on regular patrol, some erratic and unsafe driving behaviour was observed by police. A traffic stop was initiated and the driver was found to be intoxicated by alcohol; an IRP was issued and the driver lost their licence.

- An impaired boater in a row boat was found in Ganges Harbour; the row boat operator (with no electrical motor on board) was arrested, issued various violation tickets and taken to jail, where they were later released once sober.

- A checkpoint on Fulford-Ganges Road resulted in a scooter operator being found impaired by drugs and alcohol, and operating their scooter unsafely. The driver was arrested for impaired driving, their scooter impounded and their driver’s licence suspended.

- SSI RCMP were notified of an elderly person who was lost and confused; the person was located and returned by police to their residence.

- Police were called to a domestic dispute where a couple were yelling at each other with children present. Police attended the scene and spoke with both parties, thereby defusing the situation.

- Police were called when an intoxicated person on a communal property stated they wanted to kill everyone on the property; police attended and took the person into custody.

December 2023

- A missing person was found by SSI RCMP.
- Police received a report of a boater in Ganges Harbour holding a rifle. The suspect boat was boarded by police and the rifle found and seized; the boater was arrested and provided with an upcoming court date.

- Police were advised of a “sex-tortion” complaint where compromising videos had been obtained by unknown person(s) on the internet and threats made to release the videos to family and friends if money was not paid. Safety precautions were suggested by

police, resulting in no further contact by the extorter. Safe online practices were discussed and encouraged.

- SSI RCMP received a report of a person jumping in front of moving vehicles and behaving erratically. Patrols were conducted but the person was not located.

- Police responded to a report of a motor vehicle incident where a vehicle had crashed into a ditch. Alcohol, drugs and environmental conditions were ruled out by police; the cause of the crash was determined to be medical in nature. Police completed documentation requesting a driver’s licence review to determine medical competency of the driver to keep their licence.

- While conducting vehicle patrols near Ganges, an unsafe and erratic driver was found. A traffic stop was initiated and the driver was found to be intoxicated and their driving impaired by alcohol. Fines were issued, their driver’s licence was suspended and their vehicle impounded.

Impaired Driving

This year saw a large increase in the number of impaired drivers taken off our roads. It is difficult to say whether this is due to an increase in the number of impaired drivers on our roads or added enforcement. Impaired drivers are being found driving on Salt Spring roads at all times of day.

Impaired driving creates dangerous and life-threatening situations for other motorists, cyclists, and pedestrians. Please, if you drink — don’t drive!

Salt Spring RCMP Resources

This month the Salt Spring RCMP said good-bye to Const. Bruce Verhaeghe who proudly served our community over the past 5 1/2 years with distinction. With Const. Verhaeghe’s transfer, Salt Spring RCMP welcomed Const. Kevin Lloyd as Const. Verhaeghe’s replacement.

The detachment is looking at two (possibly three) additional transfers this year and are working with RCMP headquarters to mitigate any gaps in resources.

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EQUINE RESCUE

'Forgotten' horses find refuge on Salt Spring

Plucked from meat pipeline, animals deliver lessons on trauma and charity

BY ROBB MAGLEY
DRIFTWOOD STAFF

In the summer of 2022, Salt Spring Islander Natascha Wille found herself at the computer, as many of us might, mouse-clicking her way down a rabbit hole of online posts, each tugging a little more insistently at her heartstrings.

But what began as merely an education — learning how “surplus” horses are dealt with in North America — developed into a passion, and then into direct action.

Reached as the run of her photo exhibition *Faces of Forgotten Horses* entered its second week, Wille said this was not the first time she had been moved by the plight of companion animals destined for human consumption — she once rescued a pair of cats from the Indonesian meat trade.

And, she pointed out, she herself breeds lamb — harbouring no illusions surrounding the realities of meat production. But discovering how some horses are treated at the end of their “useful” lives — whether injured or old, too wild or simply unwanted — she turned her attention to what she and others call the “forgotten” horses.

“You Google pictures, you click on the picture, that picture leads you to a Facebook page,” said Wille. “And you suddenly hit the reality of this animal being in a kill pen. And you go, ‘What the hell is a kill pen?’”

The “last stop” for many horses on their way to slaughter is at various kill pen facilities in the U.S. — mostly in Texas, but also in states like Oklahoma and New Mexico. They have evolved alongside a sort of diversion stream in recent years, as a mix of good-heartedness and cold financial calculation, spawning a horse “adoption” industry that runs parallel to one for horse meat.

While arguably an industry in decline, the American Journal of Veterinary Research estimates some 20,000 horses are still slaughtered in Mexico and Canada each year — nearly all of them brought from the U.S., where a patchwork of local laws — and a 2007 de-funding of federal inspectors — has largely shut down American horse slaughterhouses.

In Mexico, where the majority are brought, pet food is the final product; in Canada, it's a source for human consumption. But it was the journey from auction houses — in states like Iowa, Montana, Pennsylvania and Tennessee — more than their destination that moved Wille to intervene in her very personal, meaningful way.

“It is extremely sobering,” said Wille. “Speaking as somebody who has a farm and raises animals for meat, the horse slaughter industry is a cruel, ugly thing. These horses are bred as companion and performance horses — and once they're no longer used, they're discarded.”

Conditions in the kill pens are regulated by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, but the frequency of enforcement varies between states; an animal representing as little as \$100 in revenue becomes, as a problem of scale, supported at the strict minimum required. In response, a handful of “rescue” organizations — driven either by compassion or profit, or often some combination — have sprung up online, posting photos and videos of available horses in varying states of health. They can be “bailed out” of the kill pen, and a second industry — transporting and “papering” the animals for adoption — fills in the gap from there.

“The Facebook pages are sometimes set up by meat traders, who pick the horses up



Three Gables Farm's Natascha Wille, with three horses purchased in the summer of 2022 from “kill pen” stock in the United States, transported to a new life at her home on Salt Spring Island.

at auctions,” said Wille. “If they can sell them on a Facebook page, they would rather do that than pack them into a trailer and do the trip to Canada or Mexico, because there's just a little bit more profit in it for them.”

The animals themselves are former work horses — largely from Amish communities, Wille said — or were bred for the quarter horse, bucking or racing industries. Auction houses obtain them for as little as \$50. Also in the mix are wild horses collected under a U.S. Bureau of Land Management arrangement, where shrewd entrepreneurs receive payment from the government to pasture them, after which they can be sold in as little as one year.

“At my age, you know, you feel when there's a space to be had, you want to give it to someone that really needs it,” said Wille. “I was turning 50; it's sort of the half-century mark, where you feel okay, if there's things you still want to do, you better do them now.”

The decision to adopt one horse, bringing a single animal from a kill pen in Texas to Salt Spring Island, to live out their last days in the peace of Wille's Three Gables Farm, was simple enough, she said. But after making the commitment, there were fraught moments; at every stage, from the initial “bail” payment to sending money to people she'd likely never meet for transport and documentation, there was always the possibility for fraud.

“You're sending these funds by PayPal to this person, and you think ‘I'm gonna get scammed, this is a scam,’” said Wille. “But the sums that you're sending — a few hundred dollars — are within a sort of a limit, where you think if I'm losing this, well, I tried, you know? I put a good foot forward here to make a difference.”

But at each step, she said, her faith prevailed; people did what they promised. The horse Wille “bailed out” was indeed removed from the pen; a second, and ultimately a third were as well — brought through additional donations, as Wille reached the end of her own budget before the end of available space at her Salt Spring farm. All were picked up by the transport company; the quarantine facility came through, and the GST was paid as they crossed the border into Canada.

All in, she said, she sent about \$20,000.

And finally, the three horses she first saw on a stranger's Facebook page were standing in her pasture.

“When these horses came, they were skin and bones,” said Wille, “because of their experience and all the stress.”

The “last stop” for some 20,000 horses each year on their way to slaughter in Mexico or Canada is at “kill pen” facilities in U.S. states including Texas and Oklahoma.

The youngest horse began to thrive almost immediately, becoming “plump, shiny and playful,” Wille said, seemingly protected from lasting effects of the ordeal by his youth and vigour. The other two are even now still “waking up,” she added, and have continued to be more mistrusting of people.

“They were work horses, we believe from the Amish,” said Wille, “who do use their horses very, very hard.”

Wille compared it to a person's recovery from trauma, where the attention of people wanting to help is more than the traumatized can handle. The horses were genuinely frightened, she said, by her attempts to be kind to them.

“They have trouble coping with my expectation of wanting to be nice to them, because they're just not ready to receive

help,” she said. “They feel like they would have to show their appreciation for that help, somehow, to avoid punishment. This is how traumatized they are, that they aren't able to fully enjoy what they now have, that safety, because they're so suspicious that it's all going to change again.”

It was unexpected and upsetting, Wille said, and disappointing, particularly at first. As a photographer, she was saddened to discover that just pointing a camera at the horses would frighten them.

“Seeing a beautiful horse like that, and you can see the scars of hard work all over,” said Wille, her voice breaking slightly. “And they're shrinking away, just from you wanting to look at them. They're not trusting your intention.”

Wille describes the horses reacting to seeing a piece of harness with terror — turning their stomachs, making them physically ill. There was for her a grieving process as she adapted to life with these animals. Part of her, she said, had imagined adopting a “horse with experience,” one that could practically show her how to drive a buggy.

But instead, she said, they wound up teaching her what charity really meant — how the act could flourish without expectations of appreciation. It was a learning curve, she said, one she wouldn't trade for anything.

“Horses are great teachers,” she said. “Oh man, does it ever sound corny. But it's true, the lessons are coming in very unexpected ways.”

Would she do it again? In a heartbeat, she said.

“It's fulfilled me,” said Wille. “It's not the way I thought it would turn out, but it's better. You might have an expectation that your kindness will be received with gratitude, but I've learned I need to completely leave it up to them — when they're ready, they'll receive that kindness.”

Wille said she'd also gained a profound, practical understanding of the power each person holds to change a life — and if she had room today, she would add more horses. She always has her eye on those websites, she said, and always has another animal picked out.

“They can show you where you're still lacking,” she said. “If you can take that, and make something good from it, then the lesson was fruitful.”

“And I'm hopeful,” she added. “One of these days, the horses will smile into my camera.”

Wille's exhibition *Faces of Forgotten Horses* will be on display at the Salt Spring Coffee's Ganges Cafe and Kitchen through Feb. 12.



Above, rescued horses enjoy an open field after harsh conditions and uncertain futures.