

CONCRETE PROGRESS



PHOTO COURTESY HANS HAZENBOOM

Workers guide the business end of a concrete boom pump, directing it into foundation forms at the site of the Salt Spring Island Fire Protection District's future fire hall Thursday, Sept. 5.

SD64

Bus caution urged

Expanded school routes surprise drivers at Bishop's Walk corners

BY ROBB MAGLEY
DRIFTWOOD STAFF

With students back in school and school buses back on Salt Spring's roads, officials are reminding island drivers to be on the lookout for both.

An expansion of service this year includes new routes reaching previously unserved communities, district officials said, including one for students residing at Salt Spring Commons, where a bus route up Charlesworth Road to Bishop's Walk seems to have caught some in the neighbourhood of Charlesworth and Cudmore roads by surprise.

"We've had a few issues with motorists speeding down the hill and being surprised by the bus coming up around a few of the curves," said Gulf Islands School District director of

operations Colin Whyte, "resulting in a near miss or two."

Whyte said bus drivers exercise a great deal of caution going around those corners, as the lines of sight there can be short — and he urges other drivers to do the same, especially during school bus operating hours.

"We're hoping to minimize the chances of an incident," he said, "and want to continue to be able to serve the students at the Commons."

Additional expanded service includes a new route up Collins Road, Whyte said, turning around at Mount Erskine Drive.

In addition to caution on corners, B.C.'s Motor Vehicle Act requires drivers to come to a complete stop when approaching a stationary school bus with its red lights flashing — including traffic from both directions, according to provincial officials.

Bus service in most Salt Spring neighbourhoods begins with the first students picked up shortly before 8 a.m.; afternoon buses generally run from 3:30 to 5 p.m.

HOUSING

Trust gaining access to rental registry info

Staff linking with data on short-term rental hosts and platforms

BY ROBB MAGLEY
DRIFTWOOD STAFF

The walls are closing in on unpermitted short-term rentals in B.C., and now enforcement officials in the Gulf Islands will have a powerful new tool at their disposal: data from a mandatory province-wide host and platform registry.

Islands Trust planning services director Stefan Cermak told Regional Planning Committee members Wednesday, Sept. 4 that staff will soon be able to access the B.C. government's new short-term rental data portal — a first-of-its-kind in Canada, created to support local governments with monitoring and enforcement of short-term rental regulations.

"I was just informed this morning that indeed, after much haranguing, we will get access to that," said Cermak. "What that means and what the implications are I'm not 100 per cent sure, but we will be signing an information-sharing agreement with the province, and we will have access to that data."

Short-term rental platforms with

1,000 or more listings in B.C. are already required to share information about their listings directly with the B.C. government on a monthly basis; that data is not disclosed to the public, according to provincial officials, but must include a host's name, address and contact information, as well as listing details, booking histories and business licence numbers if available.

"We will be signing an information-sharing agreement with the province."

STEFAN CERMAK
*Planning Services director,
Islands Trust*

Cermak said the province had previously told the Islands Trust they would not have access to the portal, due to lack of business licensing for rental hosts, but after some back-and-forth have apparently agreed to grant it. Cermak said staff would be consulting with bylaw enforcement officers to see "how that plays out."

Different islands may still see varying degrees of enforcement, depending on how they've prioritized short-term rent-

als. Gabriola Island, for example, not only prioritizes enforcement on non-compliant vacation rentals but was the only Local Trust Committee (LTC) to opt-in through the province on a principal residency requirement for them, which means enforcement could be conducted through provincial channels.

Meanwhile, Salt Spring Island's LTC dropped proactive enforcement against short-term rentals back in April, citing confusing rules and limited staff resources. Salt Spring trustee Laura Patrick has said opting into the principal residence requirement without addressing "underlying problems" in the island's regulations would likely not help the housing shortage on her island. Short-term rentals are not permitted on Salt Spring, although bed-and-breakfast operations as home-based businesses are allowed on much of the island.

According to B.C. officials, smaller platforms with fewer than 1,000 rental listings will soon be required to share the same information — "by late 2024," according to a provincial information sheet, meaning that by early 2025 the province expects all short-term rental hosts and platforms to be in the database. Not playing by the rules could result in administrative monetary penalties and court-filed compliance orders, according to the province.



Seniors' Safety

Stopping Elder Abuse & Neglect

In Collaboration!

The local Community Response Network and the SSI Library are presenting a free, in-person event featuring Cari Taylor from BC CRN, the provincial umbrella organization that supports local initiatives to reduce abuse, neglect, and self-neglect.

PLUS

Come check out these amazing presenters:

Gillian Millan and Phil Downie from Crime Stoppers, award-winning individuals recognized internationally for developing specialized training with Island Fraud Departments on Crime and Elder Abuse awareness.

Wednesday, September 25,
3:30pm at the Library



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