

COMOX VALLEY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

#101 - 3607 Small Rd. Ph: 250.334-2427

Cumberland, BC V9N 3Z8 Fx: 250.334-2414

NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release

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Town of Comox receives BC Rural Economic Recovery (RER) grant for new Marine Services Building in support of long term economic recovery from COVID-19

As part of the Provincial COVID-19 response funding, The Town of Comox has received \$1,000,000 that will support new jobs and assist in putting people back to work immediately while supporting diversification of the Town's economy.

The Marine services building will support tourism sector recovery and elevate the Town and regions Competitive as a premier travel destination while enabling new opportunities for the marine tourism sector which has been severely impacted by the pandemic.

"The Town has participated in the regional Economic Recovery Taskforce Chaired by Courtenay Mayor Bob Wells and facilitated by Economic Development, and was pleased to get an endorsement for this grant application from the Taskforce as a response to the economic crises." Said Mayor Russ Arnott.

"The Economic Recovery Task Force (ERTF) recognized the immediate regional economic impacts in construction related spending and the longer term, ongoing benefits a project on this nature would bring to support new and expanded commercial activity in the marina," said Mayor Bob Wells, City of Courtenay and the Chair of the ERTF.

The Marine Services Building is aimed to stimulate an increased level of direct economic activity in the community through the expansion of purpose-designed and built space. This type of space while readily available in many coastal communities in BC is absent in the Town of Comox and remains a critical gap in the long term growth of the marine tourism industry and the broader marine services sector. While the focus of the project is on local, community level tourism impacts, the project will also create indirect and induced impacts throughout North-Central Vancouver Island via ocean and related adventure tour operators.

"This important infrastructure need was identified as a priority within the Town of Comox Economic Development Plan and the long term regional Economic development Plan and is a key strategy within the Regional Destination Development Plans completed by Tourism Vancouver Island" says Arnott.

"I am proud of the work of the many marine tourism and marine industry advisors to the Technical Advisory Committee to the ERTF which was able to be incorporated into the grant application as well as the work of our staff in supporting the development of the submission, in collaboration with the Town of Comox and the broader industry. This is an exciting project that will support economic development in the region for years to come," said Deana Simkin, Chair of Comox Valley Economic Development and the Technical Advisory Committee to the ERTF.

Marine Services Project Background:

The Marine Services building would add a much needed commercial space to the rapidly growing Comox Marina. The Marine Services building would provide 70 square meters of indoor commercial space for 4 year round commercial or retail businesses. Further, the unique outdoor commercial space, for use during peak seasons, would provide an additional 80sqm across 4 covered outdoor vendor areas. The building would also create a fenced area for the safe storage of equipment for commercial use. This would include rentable items such as canoes, kayaks, paddle boards, sail boats, life jackets, fishing rods, and any other larger item desired by visitors. The primary construction material for the building and outdoor vendor areas will be wood.

Comox has invested over \$2 million over the past 5 years to improve the Comox marina including the addition of a 2 rentable buildings and a splash park. Through these investments the Town has seen a vast increase in the number of visitors to the Marina from within Comox, within the Comox valley, people across all Vancouver Island, and visitors from BC, Canada, America, and internationally. The Comox Harbour and Marina Park is a priority point of visitor engagement and boasts a number of internationally promoted and recognized visitor tour operators including sailing , marine mammal excursions, scuba diving, and a direct link via Harbour Air seaplanes to downtown Vancouver.

Economic Recovery Taskforce:

The Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD) initiated the establishment of the Economic Recovery Task Force (ERTF) in May, 2020, to develop and direct implementation of an Economic Development Recovery Plan to mitigate the potential economic impact to local businesses from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The ERTF is a collaborative initiative representing the Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD), City of Courtenay, Town of Comox, Village of Cumberland, K'ómoks First Nation, and CFB 19 Wing Comox. Mayor Bob Wells, City of Courtenay is the chair of the Comox Valley ERTF.

Over 30 industry leaders, business organizations, and sector association members, are participating as Industry Advisors in a Technical Advisory Sub-Committee. Industry Advisors have been submitting Business Case Action Plans containing recommendations for consideration of the ERTF, after facilitating small working-group meetings within their sector/organization, for a total of over 900 engagements to date.

For more details on the Economic Recovery Taskforce, please visit:

<https://discovercomoxvalley.com/resources/economic-recovery-task-force/>

For more information:

Mayor Russ Arnott
Town of Comox
Phone: 250-339 2202
Email: mayor@courtenay.ca