

TC mails VIM invites

There's no denying that Victoria International Marina proponent **Bob Evans** exudes a certain confidence that his project will go ahead, despite the fact that it has yet to receive official government regulatory approvals.

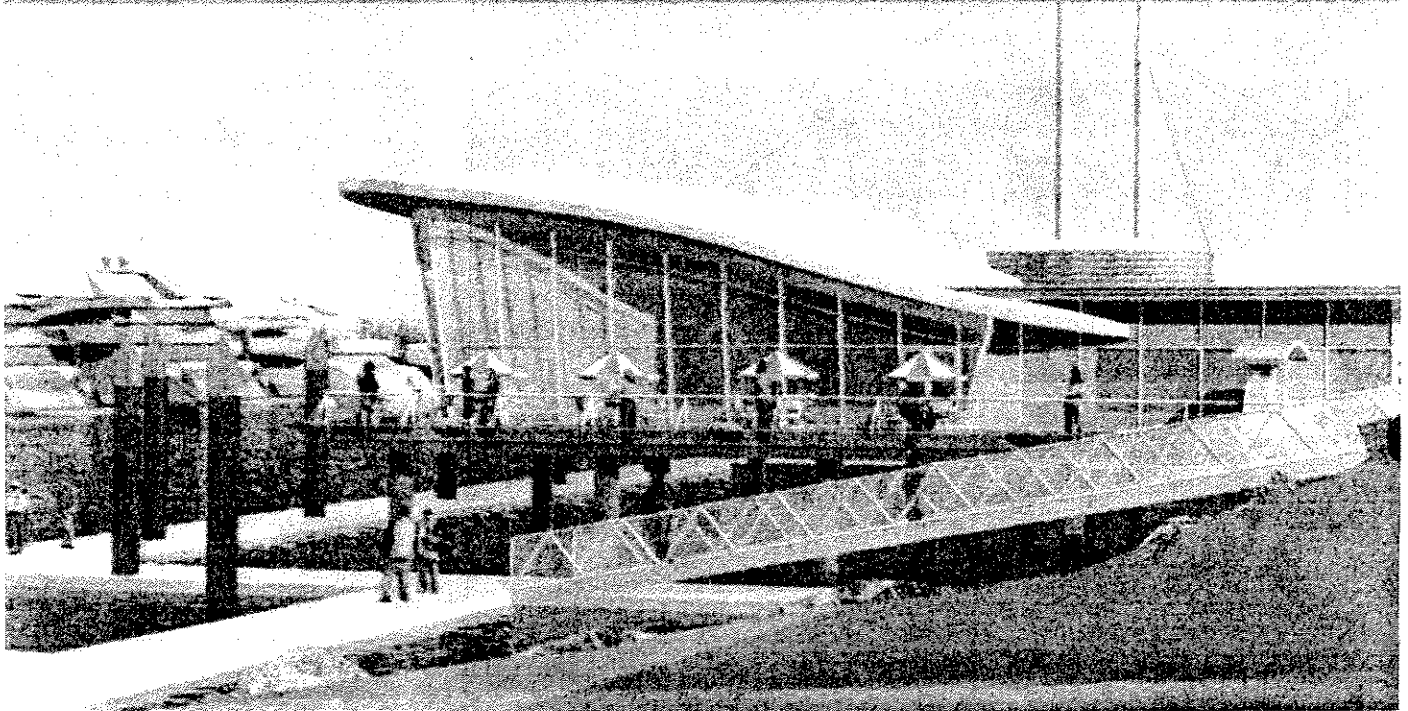
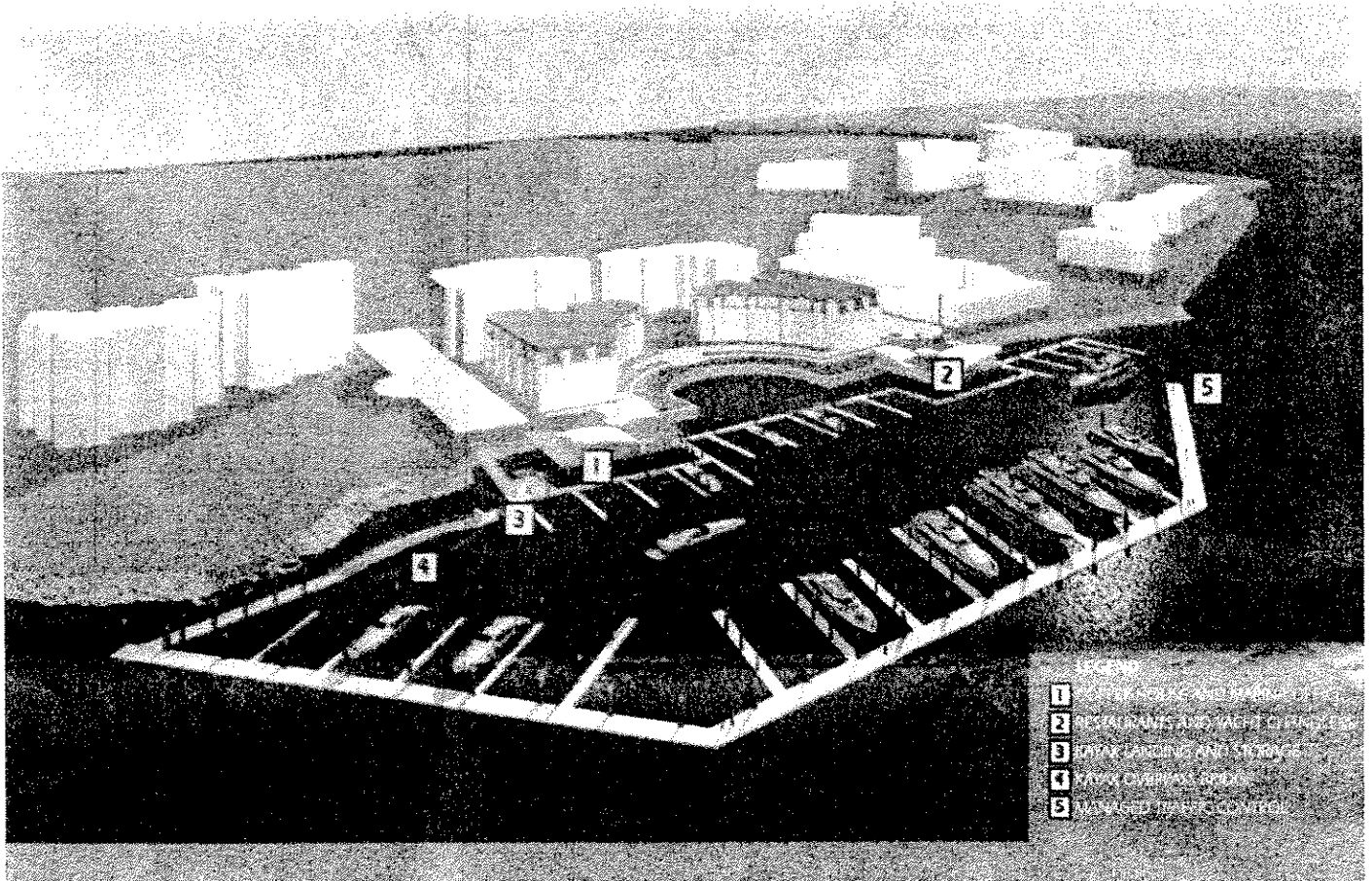
And perhaps Evans is right, given that Transport Canada recently performed some public-relations work on his behalf. In the prelude to an open house hosted by Community Marine Concepts at the Delta Ocean Pointe Resort on Saturday, March 7, dozens of area residents received invitations to the event. Makes sense, right? But these were no ordinary invitations. While they were drafted on Victoria International Marina letterhead, they arrived in Transport Canada envelopes with postage paid by the Canadian taxpayer.

And why would the regulatory body tasked with assessing the marina-development proposal send out an invitation to an open house sponsored by the developer? In an e-mail to *Monday*, Transport Canada media relations manager **Patrick Charette** writes, "It has been done as a courtesy. Anyone who sent us a letter or e-mail regarding the proposed Victoria Marina was sent a copy of the proponents' Open House invitation for their information."

Transport Canada did not offer its advertising services to the office of **Denise Savoie** and the Victoria West Community Association when they co-hosted a February 17 public meeting on the subject.

T.C. MARCH 5/69

(Part of 2 page insert and plan for by developer)



Big yachts, little harbour

Developer undaunted by opposition to mega-marina

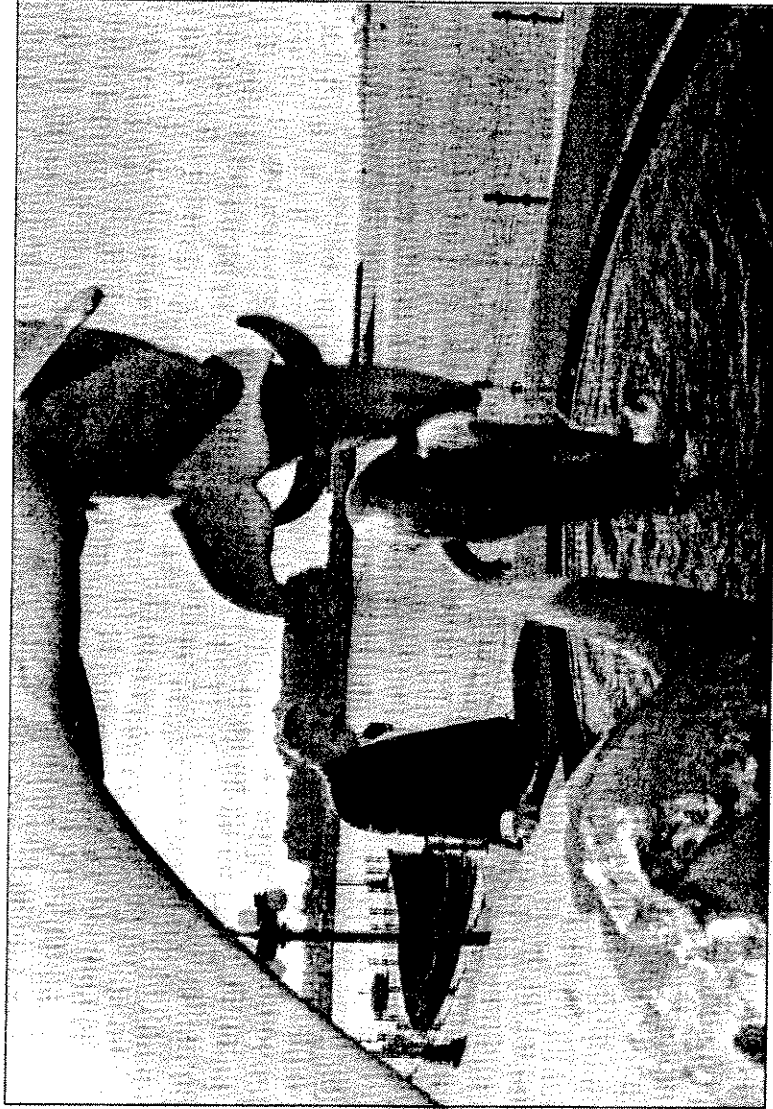
Keith Vass
News staff

There are yachts and then there are mega-yachts.

And though it may seem the most unlikely of economic times for developments catering to the mega-rich, a \$20-million plan for a 50-berth Inner Harbour marina to host \$300-million worth of boats has almost cleared its last regulatory hurdles.

Expect to see the first massive yacht – up to 55 metres long – tying up off the Songhees lands next summer, said developer Bob Evans.

"I expect construction will start at the end of the summer on the buildings and will be complete by 2010," he said. "It doesn't take long to build."



Sharon Tiffin/News staff
Victoria International Marina developer Bob Evans stands behind a fountain near the Royal Quays condominium project he built 20-plus years ago. The marina would be opposite the condominiums.

British Yachts, Little Harbour
vic. News Feb 13/09

Final approvals are pending for the project from Transport Canada and the province's Integrated Lands Management Bureau. It would extend some 150 metres into the waters in front of the Royal Quays condos. Because the project is on the water, the City of Victoria has little say over the project beyond parking.

Neither process requires Evans to engage in any public consultation, a fact that has frustrated some.

The Victoria West Community Association has been on the record against any yacht marina for the Songhees since 1986, when plans for the Royal Quays condo - another Evans project - included a much smaller dock.

Along with Victoria MP Denise Savoie, association members are hosting a public meeting at city

dents who live right in front of the planned marina. In general there has been little advertising about the development, Savoie said.

"It struck me that there was a lack of transparency about these meetings - either they were one-on-one with the developer or are held on very short notice," she said.

Savoie has written Transport Minister Lawrence Cannon asking for a more formal process that would be open to the entire community, but has not yet received a reply.

Evans said he's held 12 public meetings to date and is satisfied he's done enough.

He pitches the mega-yacht facility as a positive boon to Victoria's beleaguered tourism industry. He claims that even a half-full facility would pump \$50 million a year into the local economy.

Evans was non-committal when asked if he would attend the community association's meeting, saying he expected it would likely only attract a handful of people already decided against the project.

"Cities don't work very well if there's always a conflict. And there's always a conflict in Victoria," he said.

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up front

Battle Over Big Boats

Victoria International Marina project has residents crying foul over absence of meaningful public participation

By JASON YOUMANS

In a busy harbour where ferries, seaplanes, barges and kayaks jostle for space, a local developer's plan to build a marine enclave for the rich has revived debate about who gets a say in what happens on the body of water that defines Victoria's downtown, but is itself defined by fractured ownership and a lack of accountability.

The Victoria International Marina and Yacht Club, as the mega-yacht project has been christened by its proponents, has been percolating in the mind of former View Royal alderman Bob Evans since the mid-1980s when, under the Pacific National Investments banner, he first pitched plans for what would eventually become the Songhees condominium neighbourhood. A long-running legal battle with the City of Victoria over a council decision to downzone the lands where the marina was to sit forced the idea to the backburner (Evans' 1993 bankruptcy probably didn't help either), but he has kept the wheels in motion to see his dream come to fruition.

He re-emerged in the local media last year with blueprints for an exclusive marina to moor 50 yachts ranging in length from 65 to 135 feet, bringing on Alberta-based WAM Development Group as the managing partner in the project under the business name Community Marine Concepts. When complete, the developers say the marina will encompass 6.4 acres on the waterfront (Evans notes that's half the size of what was permitted under the original plan) and will require dredging 34,000 cubic metres of seabed sediment.

information? and it really has to be passed on to the provincial and federal authorities to respond to those requests, and they are not as accessible as we are," says veteran Victoria city councillor Pam Madoff.

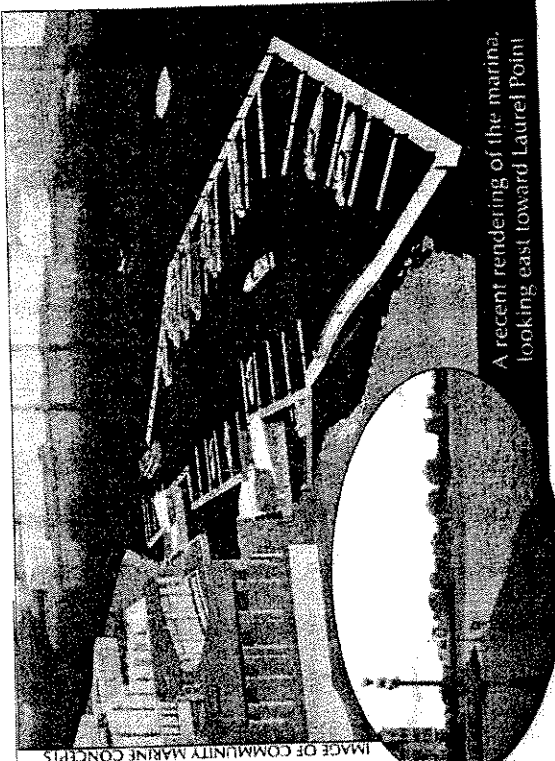
Among those concerned about the regulatory process is Victoria NDP MP Denise Savoie, whose office has been deluged with requests from people searching for information about not only the approval process, but the project itself.

Responding to constituent concerns, Savoie has demanded a genuine opportunity for the federal regulatory authorities to hear public comment on the plan—and use that information in their decision-making. She first approached the bureaucrats tasked with assessing the scheme. That proved a dead-end when Transport Canada's navigable waters protection officer Jim Schellenberg told her public participation was "not warranted [...] given the nature and setting of the project, and since other means of public input into the environmental effects of the project are readily available through the project review process." The City of Victoria received a similar response to its request for public process.

Unsatisfied with Schellenberg's response, Savoie took her concerns higher up the food chain, to federal transportation minister John Baird.

In a January 22 letter to the minister, she entreats Baird to reconsider the need for a public process, citing the volume of people who had contacted her office searching for data and asking for ways to communicate with the authorities.

"If this level of feedback from the public is not an indication of public interest, I am curious to know what citizens need to do in order to meet that criterion," Savoie wrote.



A recent rendering of the marina, looking east toward Laurel Point

"Approval of this project proposed by Community Marine Concepts LP on the north shore of Victoria harbour will effectively alter the use of this area from the current public use to private use," he writes. "[...] In order to restore our trust in the review and approval process, integrity, transparency and accountability are of primary importance. It is SISKA's contention that Transport Canada has not met these obligations." M

The office of Denise Savoie and the Vic West Community Association will co-host a public meeting on the Victoria International Marina in the Victoria City Hall ante chamber on Tuesday, February 17 at 7 p.m. As of press time, Bob Evans said he hadn't received an invitation.

"BATTLE OVER BIG BOATS"
BUTTON HALF of them in AC.
FEB 12-18/17

board has yet to respond to Savoie's request. However, in an interview with *Monday*, Savoie said the principal issue is to whom the government should be accountable when assessing a development proposal.

"I think right now the federal government's process is geared toward facilitating things for the developer, and not necessarily—and I don't think they're always opposed—but not necessarily in the public interest," says Savoie. "And there appears to be a lack of transparency."

Were there to be a genuine public process, Transport Canada and the other responsible agencies would doubtless hear from groups like the Victoria West Community Association,* which has opposed a marina on the site since its membership first commented on the plans in 1986.

At that time the association declared, "This development would damage a small, already congested harbour, limit recreational opportunities and become a regrettable precedent for future waterfront developments." The community association reaffirmed this position in a 2008 motion.

But the project's proponents have been careful to lubricate their proposal's trip through the bureaucratic mire.

Although he claimed to be unaware of the fact, Evans' former Saanich-Gulf Islands Conservative Party riding association cohort and local lawyer Bruce Hallisor is currently registered—and has been since 2007—as a federal lobbyist for the WAM Development Group concerning the "Application of transport regulations related to use of the Victoria Harbour."

Meanwhile, the provincial government, which owns a water lot required for the development, has rebuffed numerous requests from the community association and the City of Victoria over the years to designate the area as parkland, citing the fact the Songhees Master Plan designated the lot as a marina and have refused to change that tune.

In a thorough critique of the intrusion of a private playground into what many consider to be a public amenity, South Island Sea Kayaking Association president Gary Allen sums up the feeling of many interested parties on the issue.

Its proponents paint a rosy economic picture, citing the creation of 110-equivalent full-time positions at an annual value of \$4.8 million, not to mention what they say will be the \$50-million impact of the construction phase. Evans says the proponents have already spent more than \$2 million on the development and study stages alone.

The preliminary plans carried fast favour from those prone to swooning at the prospect of Victoria becoming the Pacific Northwest's answer to St. Tropez.

In a January 2007 letter to Evans, Victoria economic development commission chairman Brian Wesley wrote, "We are strongly supportive of the provision of new high value services in Greater Victoria to support this important industry and opportunity and wish you success in moving ahead with the Victoria International Marina project." Greater Victoria Chamber of Commerce CEO Bruce Carter capped off his own letter of support noting, "The economic and community benefit are significant."

But while some eye what they hope to be a surefire revenue source for a city perpetually doubting its inherent worth, others are growing increasingly frustrated at the confusing regulatory process that has seen the plan move quickly and quietly forward with apparently little notice.

Because it concerns changes to a high-traffic body of water, Transport Canada is the lead regulatory and approval agency. However, the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Environment Canada, the provincial Integrated Land Management Bureau and the City of Victoria all have jurisdiction over various aspects of the project.

"We've been getting so many inquiries asking 'How do I get

Support Secured

A March 14, 2007 letter from MLA Sian Hagen—then-minister of tourism, sport and the arts for the province—to local lawyer and project lobbyist Bruce Hallisor demonstrates the lengths the proponents are going to garner support for the marina project at all turns.

After Hallisor visited Hagen in late January, 2007, Hagen replied, "These projects would generate significant tourism activity which is critical to leveraging capital investment and creating opportunities for economic and social benefits in the Victoria region [...] We support WAM Development Ltd.'s plans to initiate tourism activity in the Victoria harbour, and look forward to hearing more about these exciting developments."

An April 19 letter to project lead Bob Evans shows he pitched the project to the province too. Then-minister of economic development Colin Hansen wrote, "Such private initiatives stimulate our regional economies by producing a competitive and vibrant marketplace. I wish you success in your endeavours."

The aforementioned letters were appended to an environmental assessment compiled by Chatwin Engineering and submitted to the federal and provincial government agencies as part of the permitting process. This raised red flags for Archipelago Marine Research Ltd. principal Brian Emmett, who was asked by Victoria MP Denise Savoie to review the proponents' environmental assessment report and identify perceived shortcomings.

Emmett writes in his review, "It is highly unusual for an Environmental Assessment to include letters of support. The Environmental Assessment is intended to be a systematic determination of environmental effects and evaluation of the significance of these environmental effects. Letters of support have no role in this process. I note that several of the letters appended to the EA report are from elected officials. This potentially prejudices the evaluation of the EA by public servants who are answerable to these elected officials." —J.Y.

* Victoria is a small town, and in the interest of transparency, it should be noted that Victoria West Community Association president Jo-Ann Youmans is a relative of the author. She refused to provide any information for this story.

Marina could damage city's reputation: MP

Rebecca Aldous
News staff

It's a national issue, Esquimalt-Juan de Fuca MP Keith Martin told a rally last week aimed to stop a proposed 2.5-hectare, 55-slip luxury yacht marina on the Songhee's waterfront.

The province's capital and its inner harbour is known for its beauty – beauty that would be destroyed by the marina proposed by Community Marine Concepts developer Bob Evans.

"This proposal is going to do harm to our city," Martin said during the Victoria Harbour Defence Alliance public meeting on Wednesday, attended by about 250 people.

Evans hopes to build a \$20-million marina catering to luxury yachts 20 to 55 metres in length.

Transport Canada is assessing the project's impact on the harbour.

Some of the city's former mayors – Peter Pollen, David Turner and Alan Lowe – spoke against the marina plan at the meeting.

The public should focus its opposition to the project toward the provincial government, as the marina developer must get approval from both the provincial and federal government, Lowe said.

Victoria city councillors are most likely being advised by lawyers not to speak on the issue, he added.

Noticeably absent at the meeting was Evans.

When asked by if he was invited, Pollen, who sent out the invitation, replied Evans was invited to the meeting but not to sit on the discussion panel. Pollen said the meeting was meant for people against he development.

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BM bullish on BC Liberals

It's no secret that real-estate developers in British Columbia have done well by eight years of **Gordon Campbell's** Liberal government, so it comes as no surprise that they're rewarding him with hefty political donations heading into the May 12 provincial election.

Electors BC records show that the boys of Bear Mountain seem particularly smitten with the liberal's campaign, as players associated with the luxury golf-course development have opened up their wallets.

Bear Mountain Master Partnership sent the heralds a cheque for \$24,900. **Les Bjola's** Turner Lane Development Corporation added \$10,000 to the BC Libs' kitty, a sum matched by Bear Mountain's vice president of corporate and legal affairs, **Philip LeSeur** through a numbered company of which he is sole proprietor. **Len Barrie** threw in \$1,000 of his own cash, and **Dale Sproule**, the project's director of real estate, kicked in \$335.

A little further down the slope where the South Skirt Mountain project is underway, **Russ Trace**, through a combination of Capital City Paving company and personal donations, kicked in \$2,300 to the Libs re-election efforts.

Even Langford mayor **Stew Young** got in on the action, making a \$1,500 donation through his Evergreen Industries, the alternate business name of his company Alpine Disposal and Recycling.

With former Colwood mayor and West Shore development aficionado **Jody Twa** running against the NDP's **John Horgan** in the riding, it only makes sense his old friends would help the cause.

Meanwhile, no record could be found in Elections BC's filings as to whether the Last Tree in Langford had scraped together enough cash to donate to its own preservation.

One down, one to go

The City of Victoria announced last week that it has hired a director of sustainability. Filling the recently created slot is **Kim Fowler**, currently a senior consultant at Pottinger Caherty Ltd. Although the jobs responsibilities remain rather nebulous, Fowler's annual salary will start at \$108,581.

And while it took less than two months to fill the sustainability director's position, Victoria has now been without a city manager since **Penny Ballantyne** resigned from the role in early January. *Monday* asked City communications manager **Katie Josephson** about the hold up.

"Fair question," she replied via e-mail. "However, the hiring processes are very different as the City Manager is a hire of Mayor and Council and we retained a recruitment firm to do a nationwide

search. We received a high level of interest from across the country and the recruitment has now closed. We expected that the entire process would take three or four months and the process is on track and almost complete."

Hobbs abandons ship

Local property developer **Bob Evans'** plan to build a parking lot for the boats of the mega-rich has been springing leaks of late.

The latest comes in the form of Victoria Harbour Ferry CEO **Barry Hobbs**, who will go before Victoria city council on Thursday night to share what he believes to be significant safety risks posed by the Victoria International Marina and Yacht Club.

"That development on the harbour's North shore, for us and our business, would represent a plus, economically," he told *Monday*. "It makes absolute sense for us to say 'Wow, we're going to have another stop, we're going to be picking people up and dropping them off, we'll increase our passenger load, so there's nothing but good news from a commerce point of view. But from a safety point of view, which is our number-one concern, it is not good news.'"

Hobbs says his company accounts for 51 percent of all movements in Victoria Harbour, and as such, his pilots have likely the best understanding of what the marina would mean for traffic patterns and safety.

"When you put six-and-a-half acres of vessels and marina on that foreshore, in our view, it will choke off the harbour for all users," he says. "It will set up circumstances that in our opinion will cause—during stormy periods or heavy winds—wave refractions that will essentially create a boil in the harbour and therefore make it unsafe for aircraft and marine operators."

Hobbs says a letter of support with his signature, published on several occasions by the VIM proponents, has since been removed from promotional at his request, as it was predicated on outdated plans for the water lot in question.

Get in line for the government dime

Statistics Canada reported this week what many already know—British Columbia is shedding jobs at a rapid pace and Victoria is not insulated from the trend.

The latest data shows the number of employment insurance beneficiaries in Victoria increased 88.8 percent between February 2007 and February 2008, from 1,870 to 3,530.

—Jason Youmans

news@mondaymag.com

Mega-yachts don't float

Re: Letters, March-April

Overlooked in the recent debate on the mega-yacht marina is the incredible pollution these vessels create.

A Google search on fuel efficiency of yachts shows that a modern 75-foot powerboat burns about 450 litres (99 gallons) of diesel fuel per hour, producing 2,200 pounds of carbon dioxide. A six-hour cruise will consume 594 gallons of fossil fuels and create 13,200 pounds of carbon dioxide—more than an average car in a year. Multiply this by dozens of boats coming and going all summer and you have a massive and extremely serious environmental impact. And this doesn't even consider the vast resources used, waste produced and pollution created in the initial construction of these fiberglass behemoths. Their ecological footprint is staggering.

Mega-yachts are the Hummers of the sea. Nothing says "I don't give a damn about the environment" more than one of these garish boats. Instead of setting an example of resource conservation and frugality in this age of ecological crises, the extraordinarily wealthy parade around in hyper-polluting floating palaces.

As the Earth struggles with the crisis of climate change, it is inappropriate to encourage mega-yachts with a giant private parking lot in our publically owned harbour. Victoria is still a beautiful, charming city precisely because we have resisted this type of development.

Richard Brunt, Victoria

Songhees condo owners have no right to a view: Servos

From Page 1

and bring as much as \$50 million annually to the regional economy.

Most of that would come if and when super-yacht owners elect to base their craft in Victoria for some or all the year.

Opponents worry about the view, noise, fumes and pollution. Kayakers fear being forced out into the landing or taxiing ways of the seaplane operations which make Victoria Harbour the fourth busiest airport in Canada, or so says Randy Wright, vice president of Harbour Air.

Wright says "concerns have been expressed to Transport Canada," about the flight and taxi paths, and adds, "We are relying on Transport Canada to address the safety concerns."

The Songhees were built with a marina in mind but a much smaller one intended to front a hotel. The hotel gave way to a condominium complex whose initial residents complained to city hall about the loss of sight lines and got the city to rezone the water lots that were part of the plans to one storey. Evans' original company sued the city all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada, finally getting \$1.5 million for its investment in marina amenities in 2005.

With the lawsuit concluded, Evans found new investors, Edmonton-based WAM Development Group, for the marina, and decreased the number of berths while increasing their size to draw the growing number of mega yachts. Audrey Whittall, chairperson of the Victoria West Community Association's harbour committee, notes that the association has always been opposed to the marina, whatever its size. Now she summarizes the objections as environmental, because of the dredging of the seabed to accommodate the



NewsGroup

SEAPLANE TAXIING IN VICTORIA'S INNER HARBOUR

Will pleasure boats impede work planes?

yachts; aesthetic, because of the loss of a viewscape for those using the public walkway along the Songhees; and safety. "The marina will reduce the harbour to a narrow channel being used by the Coho, pleasure craft and seaplanes. The seaplane traffic has increased a lot. We're in favour of a working harbour, but let's keep it working at a scale that can be handled without safety hazards."

The South Island Sea Kayaking Association has weighed in on the issue, warning the provincial government that (as far as the association is concerned) the Land Act requires the government to determine if the marina project is in the public interest before it can issue a water lease.

Evans says there will be a \$100,000-bridge to provide passage for kayakers through the marina.

However, Linda Thomson, president of the Victoria Canoe and Kayak Club, says the proposed bridge is too narrow for large outrigger canoes which use the Songhees shore to get

from the clubhouse in the Gorge waterway to the ocean for practices two or three times a week. "The club's position is that a marina might be okay but one this size raises concerns for safety."

Evans, however, says that, environmentally, the marina actually is a positive: dredging will improve the seabed by removing a metre-and-a-half of wood chips that were dumped on it through decades of sawmill use. "As far as being a habitat for sea life, it will be enhanced, he adds. Since yachts will take on fuel at Fishermen's Wharf, and plug into the local power supply and the marina's waste system, noise, air and water pollution will be minimal.

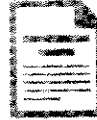
But each issue could fall to a different government to decide. And some, such as the public's or residents' views from their condos or the shoreline walkways, may fall to no agency at all.

The Harbour Authority's Servos says that quite apart from the pros and cons of the Victoria International Marina project, the issue underlines the need for the Authority to assume a much wider role over activities within the waterway. "We're only partway there," he says. **BE**

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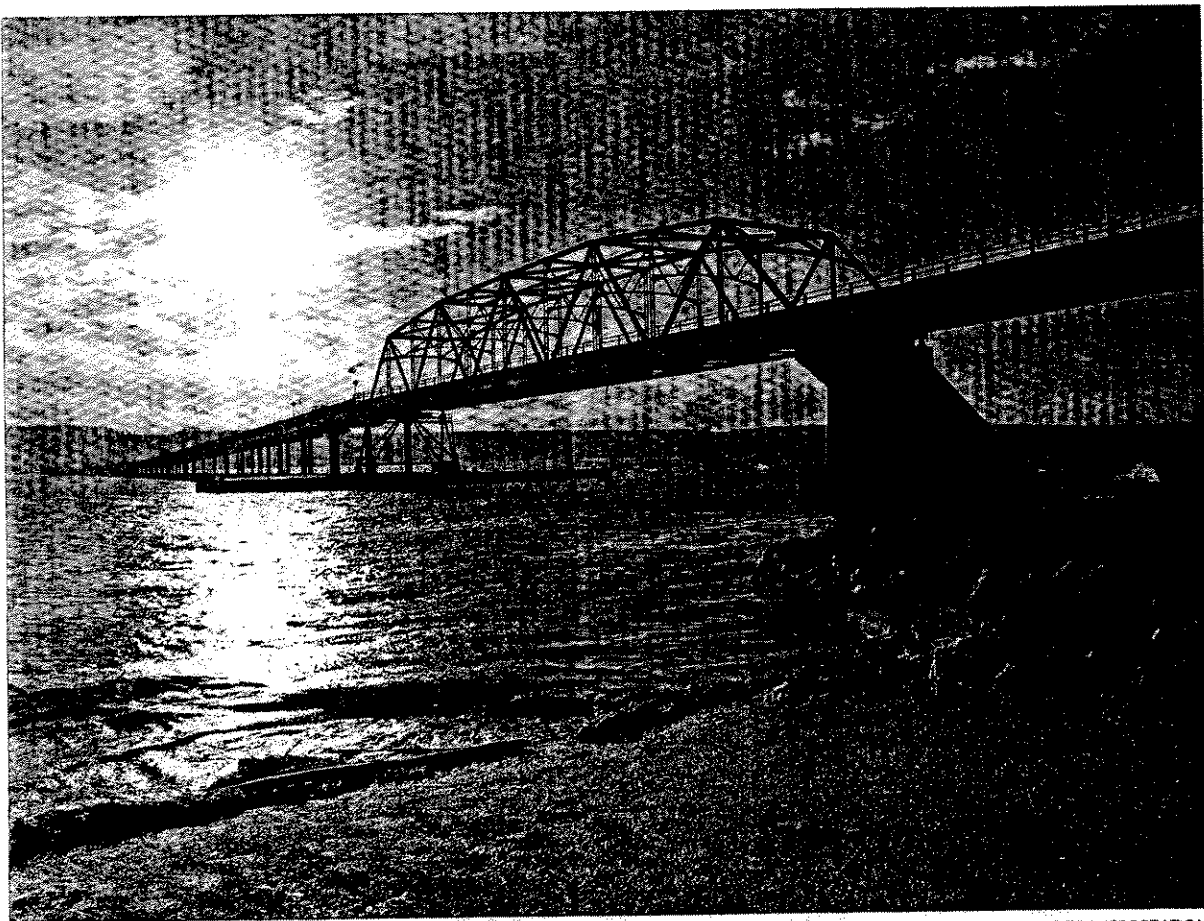
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WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Washington state's Hood Canal Bridge — now being replaced in a \$500-million US project — was the third largest floating bridge in the world. A Victoria firm bought a chunk of the bridge and plans to refurbish the massive floating concrete pontoons for resale.

Harbour about to be WAMed?

Sam Williams solved one puzzle for me: I live on Dallas Rd and have seen these ships come in loaded with mega yachts and I thought they were being manufactured somewhere else and being brought here to sell. I thought this was strange since we already have a pretty strong boat manufacturing segment out in the Keating area and at the airport in Sidney. So he solved that question for me.

But another puzzle popped up the last time I saw one of these ships come in. I noticed that two of the boats that were unloaded headed over to the US. Port Angeles, I am assuming. I thought it might be a tax thing—it being cheaper to unload in Canada and then cruise over to the US. I guess they just hopped a ride and had a different destination. This does not support Evans' theory, though, of there being all these mega yachts wanting to be in Canada.

Turning to the idea of work/job creation, etc, in regards to his project, if you go to any marina, especially out in Sidney at Van Isle or Port Sidney, you will notice some fairly large boats. One of the other things that you might note, if you are there a lot, is how little they move. They usually just sit there. On average, I would estimate that most of these boats might go out for two weeks a year. I think I might be

overly generous here. Having been in the boating world myself for a while now, I have always wondered at this largesse and how little recreation and pleasure is truly achieved by owning one of these behemoths.

They usually have someone hired to "care-take" their charges. A kind of security, maintenance, boat cleaning outfit—some bill themselves as yacht management companies. These, in my opinion, would be the main benefactors of such an endeavour as Mr Evans' has in mind. I am assuming there might be spill-over work, but again generally these boats are fairly new—and not used much—so they need little work.

Personally, if they were going to build a marina, I would say build one for smaller boats, in the 27-foot to 40-foot range. There is always a need for moorage in the Greater Victoria area. And the people on boats this size use them. They are out a lot of the time, year round. They spend their money locally on anything from boat repair and maintenance to food, booze, fuel, entertainment etc. To me, *they* are the heart and soul of the boating community—not some guy who flies in from wherever for a week, jumps on his boat, powers over to Port Angeles, loads up on cheap food, booze, and fuel and then cruises back through the lower Gulf Islands for a couple of days. If you have ever been anchored in a harbour when one of these "yachts" comes in, it can be an interesting experience. I'd say 90 percent of the time nobody gets off the boat. If they do, it is often when they unload one of those annoying seadoo things that then roars around the bay and surrounding area. That's a real contribution to the local economy and peace of mind. Meanwhile, the rest of us have rowed ashore, hiked, walked, beach-combed, chatted with each other when we meet, and if in a community, go to a local restaurant, buy food, gifts and anything else that catches our fancy.

Patrick Isaac

BUSINESS

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Anti-marina forces flood meeting

Opponents say mega-yacht facility not a good fit for Inner Harbour

JEFF BELL
Times Colonist

The tide of opinion was decidedly anti-marina last night at Victoria High School.

About 250 people filled the school auditorium for a public meeting to address the ongoing controversy over a 48-berth marina for large yachts proposed for the Songhees area of the Inner Harbour.

The meeting was put together by a citizens'

group called Victoria Harbour Defence Alliance, which includes former Victoria mayor Peter Pollen. Pollen was joined by two other former Victoria mayors, David Turner and Alan Lowe, in speaking out against the marina plan.

Also voicing concerns about the \$20-million proposal in recent weeks have been the Victoria West Community Association and local paddlers, along with Victoria MP Denise Savoie.

The marina project has been put forward by developer Bob Evans and Western Asset Management Group of Alberta. It would require about 900 metres of shoreline.

While Evans touts the marina as good for tourism, those opposing it say the Inner Harbour is not suitable for large yachts and assert that views from shore would be adversely affected.

Greater Victoria Harbour Authority chairman Don Prittie has said he supports the marina as long as there are no safety issues, and said he has been told that is the case by Trans-

port Canada.

The concept of having a marina at the Songhees stems from a 1987 agreement between the province and the City of Victoria. In order for the marina proposal to proceed, it requires approvals from both Trans-Canada and Fisheries and Oceans Canada, along with a city development permit and a provincial lease for a two-hectare water lot.

Pollen told the Vic High crowd the marina has to be stopped.

"The grotesque nature of this project speaks for itself," he said.

Lowe said a marina for

mega-yachts would be "out of proportion" for what Victorians want.

"The issue here is we love our harbour," he said. "We want to keep it the way it is."

Esquimalt-Juan de Fuca MP Keith Martin quoted from a letter he has written to federal Transport Minister John Baird to underline his objections to the marina, and to emphasize his concern that it won't fit with existing activity like plane traffic.

"Against this backdrop of a congested harbour, this marina will be a recipe for disaster," he said.

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Marina's benefits lauded

**RICHARD WATTS
and CARLA WILSON**
Times Colonist staff

A proposed Songhees marina for large yachts offers opportunities for everyone from boatyards to grocers, florists and even artists, says the chairman of the Greater Victoria Harbour Authority.

Don Prittie said his experience with big yachts in places like Quadra Island is that owners stock up on groceries, bring in local florists with fresh arrangements every week, and hire everyone from cleaners to maintenance workers and mechanics.

"And art — it was nothing for these big yacht owners to spend \$5,000 to \$10,000 on a piece of art," Prittie said yesterday. "I have no doubt that there is going to be significant economic spin-off for the region."

It was the first public comment on the marina proposal from the Greater Victoria Harbour Authority, which has no direct control over the proposed facility.

Nevertheless, Prittie said as long as there are no safety issues — and Transport Canada has assured him there are none — the

authority favours the marina, which fits its mandate to keep the Greater Victoria Harbour a "working harbour."

He said local boatyard expertise, from Sidney through to harbour shipyards, is unsurpassed anywhere in the world. "It's a significant business and it's a clean business."

Victoria developer Bob Evans and partner Western Asset Management of Alberta are proposing to build a \$20-million facility with 48 slips. But the plan has run into opposition from Songhees residents who complain their waterfront views will be spoiled and kayakers who complain it will interfere with paddling access.

Opponents also claim the addition of the big yachts will compromise safety in the harbour.

The provision for a marina in front of Songhees dates back to the 1987 master-plan agreement between the City of Victoria and the province.

But to proceed, the marina requires approvals from Transport Canada and Fisheries and Oceans Canada, a development permit from the city and a lease from the province on a two-

hectare water lot.

When the province receives an application for a water-lot lease, it first checks that it complies with the zoning, which this does, a provincial spokesman said.

After that, a proposal must be publicly advertised, which happened in December and January, she said. The deadline for submissions was February.

It normally takes four to six months for the province to examine public submissions and consult with the parties involved, including First Nations. A decision on the lease will likely be made by the end of the summer or early in the fall by the provincial Integrated Land Management Bureau.

Meanwhile, marina opponent and former Victoria mayor Peter Pollen said citizens have no idea of the visual impact of the marina because images provided by the developer show a mainly empty site, rather than one filled with 48 mega-yachts.

Pollen is one of the organizers behind a Wednesday evening public meeting at Victoria High School on the plan.

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MP to head meeting on marina proposal

Savoie, government officials to discuss contentious Inner Harbour project catering to mega-yachts

CARLA WILSON
Times Colonist

Victoria MP Denise Savoie meets today with three levels of government to sort out the complex regulatory process surrounding the contentious Songhees mega-yacht marina project.

Savoie, a critic of the plan, said citizens are confused about what the various governments and their agencies require, and where the marina proposal stands with respect to necessary approvals.

The 1 p.m. in camera meeting at city hall is to simply clarify the status of approvals and to ensure that nothing falls between the cracks," Savoie said

yesterday from Ottawa. Officials from federal, provincial, and municipal governments will be present.

Savoie met with Transport Minister John Baird in Ottawa recently about the marina issue and lobbied for a public meeting on the proposal.

She expects Transport Canada will hold such a meeting after the provincial election.

Chris Day, press secretary for Baird's office, did not confirm that a public meeting would be held, although he said any public meeting would take place after the election.

Savoie and the Vic West Community Association

earlier held a public meeting on the marina. The developer followed with his own meeting, and a group of project critics are staging a meeting Wednesday at Victoria High School.

Developer Bob Evans and partner Western Asset Management Group of Alberta are proposing to build Canada's first marina specifically targeting the large-yacht market: a \$20-million marina with 48 slips.

The length of the marina along the shoreline is about 900 metres. The total length of the project, measuring individual slips, would be about 1,500 metres, Evans said.

Marina plans require a development permit from

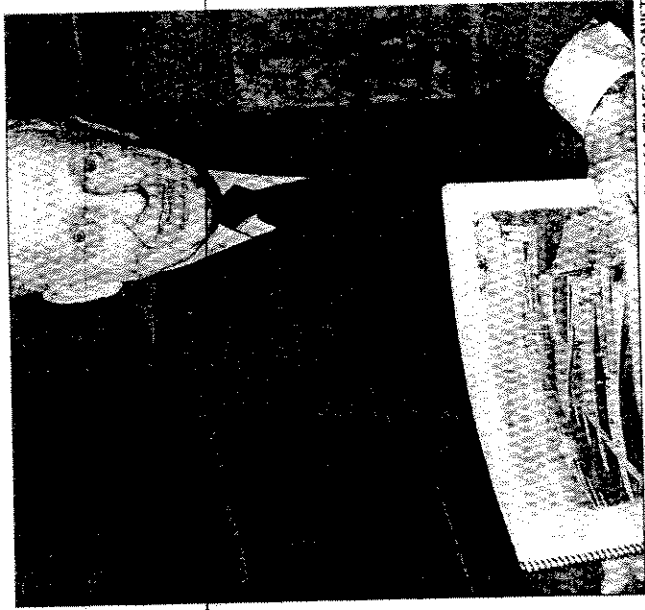
the city, a 6.2-acre water-lot lease adjacent to two lots underwater, which are already owned by the developer and total one acre, plus approvals from Transport Canada and Fisheries and Oceans Canada.

The development would enhance Victoria's tourism industry and see boat owners and guests spending money in the capital region, said Evans.

International media catering to this wealthy group are already writing about Victoria and the marina plans, he said.

Opponents argue the harbour is too small for large yachts, the vessels would affect Songhees views, many paddlers will lose their access to that portion of the shoreline and safety in the busy harbour would be compromised.

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ADRIAN LAM, TIMES COLONIST

Bob Evans's plan for a \$20-million marina in the Inner Harbour has caused an uproar among some Victorians.

Former mayor maligns mega yachts

The proposed Victoria International Marina and Yacht Club is at last making ripples among the city's power brokers.

How else to explain a meeting scheduled for Wednesday, April 29 at Vic High, that will see four former Victoria mayors together on one stage to discuss harbour development issues?

On deck for the event, organized by the Victoria Harbour Defence Alliance, are **Peter Pollen**, **David Turner**, **Bob Cross** and **Alan Lowe**.

Pollen shared his thoughts on the project with *Monday*:

"I think the process of handling this whole thing has been absolutely outrageous, conflicts of interest, absolutely no discussion, it's gone as far as it has with virtually no notice to the public," he says.

"The second thing is that it is entirely inappropriate to have 50 mega-yachts owned by mega-yachters buying condominium berths at \$50,000 to \$80,000 a berth, and they're going to store these things in our tiny little harbour. It's just crazy."

Pollen points out that no scale drawings of the proposal have ever been made available for public viewing.

Pollen also called out the current City Hall officials for their collective failure to make a stand on the issue.

"I don't know why [**Dean Fortin's**] not fighting about it, except that he's a gentle man and doesn't want any controversy. Well, if he doesn't want any controversy, he sure as hell shouldn't be in City Hall."

VIM developer **Bob Evans** emerged the victor in a drawn-out court battle with the City after the then-council changed the zoning on two Evans-owned lots. Evans eventually won more than \$1 million in compensation for lost revenue.

Pollen says that while final authority on the matter rests with the provincial and federal government, the municipality's word has value.

"If the City of Victoria came out strongly against it—or even for it—it would carry a lot of weight."

MONDAY MAGAZINE - APRIL 23 - 29, 2009

Recently, another vestige of Victoria public life entered the marina mix in the form of former city manager—and frequent *Monday* whipping boy—**Don Roughley**, who has spoken out against it.

Also on the mega-yacht front, the West Bay Paddling Club recently sent a communique to the marina's proponents demanding a letter of support penned by one of its members, allegedly on behalf of the club, be removed from any promotional material associated with the mega-yacht marina.

The club members wrote, "On two separate occasions, **Kris Terauds** has alerted [Evans] and **Lachlan Maclean** to the false claims contained in Mr. **Hartman's** letter. With this letter in hand, we ask that you respect our freedom of speech and remove the offending letter."

In other mega-yacht news, the South Island Sea Kayakers Association has engaged the help of local lawyer **Irene Faulkner** to petition the province's Integrated Lands Management Bureau to reject the VIM proposal on the grounds it contravenes proper practices regarding public properties, citing specifically that according to ILMB's mandate, "Crown land values are managed for the benefit of the public," and "Economic, environmental and social needs and opportunities are identified and supported."

THE CAPITAL

Owners slash prices to move luxury yachts

**KATIE DeROSA
CARLA WILSON**

Times Colonist

Rows of perfectly polished yachts lined Victoria's Inner Harbour at the annual Floating Boat Show this weekend, but for many this year, the economy has put the dream of owning a luxury watercraft a lot further out of reach.

Yacht brokers were turning on extra charm yesterday as they tried to offload their clients' yachts, which has proven more difficult than ever with the market for pleasure boats in freefall. Some have slashed prices, pressured by owners desperate to sell.

A 57-foot yacht listed by a private seller for \$1 million is now going for \$599,000, said Frank Durksen, a broker for Findyachts.com, which has offices in Sidney and Anacortes, Wash.

"These are Canadian people who seriously need to sell this boat."

It's a common tale across Canada and the U.S., he said, as people decide they can no longer afford their boats, which can cost \$1,500 or more a month to maintain.

Durksen, who specializes in selling "big boats" — worth half million dollars or more — said prospective buyers are down 80 per cent.

"Many of them have the money but are in a wait-and-see mode." But that didn't stop close to 80 exhibitors from showcasing their goods at the 19th annual show, which is hosted by the B.C. Yacht Brokers' Association and ends today.

Victoria attracts more high-end, serious clientele, because of the number of wealthy retirees, said Cesare Verrelli, a broker for Freedom Marine, who was showing a \$2-million yacht adorned with cherry-wood panelling, cream-coloured leather upholstery and a glass spiral staircase.

The two owners are looking for a third partner to split the cost, a route some are taking to make owning a yacht more practical and affordable.

Verrelli concedes the downturn in the market has reduced the amount of interest, but those who do have money are looking to take advantage of the deals.

Greg Andrew, who sells for Van Isle Marina, said sales for lower-end boats, priced between \$38,000 to \$250,000, are steady.

Several brokers said traffic at the boat show was down compared to previous years. Boat-show patrons — locals, as well as some from Alberta, the Lower Mainland and Washington state — saw



DEBRA BRASH, TIMES COLONIST

Frank Durksen Sr. of Findyachts.com shows the slashed price of a 57-foot Cooper Westcoast Floating Boat Show ends today. was worth over a million dollars.

boats ranging from glossy kayaks to \$3-million yachts.

This year, 135 boats are in the water, down by 10 or 20 from previous years, said show manager Kathy Harvey. "This is the slowest ever," said Al Owen, founder of Sidney-based Wendog

Yachts, which manufactures high-end power boats that sell for \$800,000 to \$3 million. Business has tapered off in the past two years, he said, aboard his own 79-foot-long catamaran. Owen said people tell him how beautiful the boats are, "but

nobody has put their hands in their pockets and come out with a cheque."

Last year, one of the West Coast's largest boat stores, Olympic Boat Centres, was forced into bankruptcy protection. Owen has five unsold boats and has been

forced to drop his prices. In the past, the boats were sold before they were even finished, he said. "I don't think the money's there. People are not investing. They are scared to move. They are scared to do anything."

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TC-4.18.09

Kayakers want marina scrapped

SANDRA McCULLOCH
Times Colonist

A kayaking group is demanding that the province turn down a developer's application to build a mega-yacht marina in Victoria Harbour.

The South Island Sea Kayaking Association has told Agriculture and Lands Minister Ron Cantelon, whose ministry must issue a water lease for the development to go ahead, that the proposed marina would contravene the public interest, the Land Act and common-law rights.

A decision on the \$20-million marina, proposed by developer Bob Evans and Western Asset Management Development Group of Alberta, is expected this summer.

The marina must also pass an environmental assessment by Transport Canada, currently accepting public submissions. "The goal is to ensure everybody gets a fair hearing," said ministry spokesman Rod Nelson, adding Minister John Baird has asked Transport officials to work with MP Denise Savoie, the City of Victoria and the province to determine the focus of a meeting on the marina "in the near future."

There is growing opposition to the development from groups concerned about lost water views from the Songhees Walkway, the project's scale and increased traffic in the already congested harbour.

Calvin Sandborn, director of the environmental law clinic at the University of Victoria, says under the Land Act, Cantelon cannot legally hand over a water lease unless it's in the public interest. Sandborn said kayakers have a legal right to paddle in waters where the marina is planned.

The developer has suggested a passageway will be built for canoes and kayaks, but the five-to-eight-metre gap won't be big enough for outrigger canoes, said Sandborn.

If the marina is approved, the sea kayaking association might take the matter to court, said Sandborn.

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TC-4.7.09

Marina meeting welcome

The federal government's decision to call a public meeting on plans for a Songhees mega-yacht marina is a welcome development for the controversial project. As one of the primary stakeholders in the permit process, the government should be accountable for its reasoning behind any approvals the development receives.

Victoria MP Denise Savoie, who has been pushing Ottawa for months to call a public meeting on the marina, expects the decision to hold the meeting will delay the issuing of federal permits for the \$20-million proposal, which features 48 berths for large luxury yachts in the Inner Harbour.

Savoie and the Vic West Community Association held their own meeting in February. Developer Bob Evans, who is working with Western Asset Management Development Group of Alberta, followed with a meeting in March.

Emotions are running high about the marina. Opponents and supporters are accusing each other of circulating misinformation, which is why yet another public meeting — especially under the aegis of the federal government — can hopefully dispel some of the rancour and allow the project to be judged on its merits or failings.

Many concerns, including the environmental impact of the development and how area residents' views might be affected, seem legitimate and worthy of discussion.

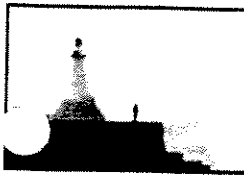
Others, such as the loss of some access to kayakers, seem less so. The Songhees area is built up to such an extent, and has such relatively few points of access, that it's not surprising kayakers are a fairly rare sight in the area. There are many superior waterways in Greater Victoria for non-motorized boating.

The development would include a restaurant, and would create jobs at a time when they are needed. And the developer notes that dredging the seabed, which would be required to make room for the yachts, would help to bring back the sea life that has been sadly lacking since 32,000 cubic metres of wood chips and other industrial byproducts were dumped there before the area was transformed into high-end residential use.

However, there is no denying that adding more large yachts to the Inner Harbour represents an increase to an already bustling volume of traffic. And that once approved and built, there is no going back if residents decided they really didn't want it after all.

Savoie deserves credit for holding Transport Minister John Baird's feet to the fire on this issue: Residents deserve to know the rationale behind any federal approvals on the project.

A development of this scale requires a complete airing of the marina's pros and cons. Anything less is unworthy of the Inner Harbour's beauty and potential.



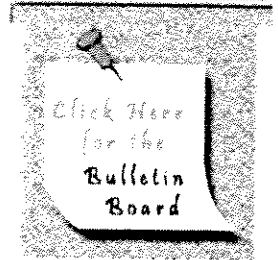
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Troubled Waters

By Doreen Marion Gee

Blades of orange and red stretch over aqua waves. Boats rock in the wind. Gold light dances on the water to the rythmn of distant mountains. This is our beloved Victoria Harbour at daybreak. But what will it look like when the sun sets? Robert Evans wants to change this horizon. As Vice-President of Community Marine Concepts, he wants to build a marina complex for big yachts in Victoria Harbour that will be five times the size of the floating wharves in the Inner Harbour. The \$20 million Victoria International Marina will span the Songhees foreshore between Ocean Pointe Hotel and Spinnakers. About fifty slips will house yachts up to 145 feet long and 21 feet high - some as permanent fixtures. Evans' vision is ambitious and innovative and will bring tourist dollars into our city. But judging by the public reaction so far, this may be a tough sell for Evans. As he steers his project towards the horizon, Evans is hitting stormy waters. He faces an ocean of public concerns about his project. Many people feel left out to sea. Some wonder about the fit with a small harbour known for its old - world beauty and ambience. It is time for a collective vision for our harbour to guide us all into shore.


Robert Evans is a personable and interesting man. He has worked at the CBC, given a speech at the White House and masterminded the fireworks at English Bay. He is a passionate advocate for his project: "This is a chance for people to learn more about the ocean we have here." He says that the project will provide a substantial boost to James Bay's economy. Since he bought sixteen Songhees acres in 1986, he has built parks, walkways, and streets and cleaned up Lime Bay. But a lot has changed in twenty years. In 1987, the Songhees Master Agreement outlined the development of the Songhees lands, which included a marina. But they could not have foreseen the

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April - 2009

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Citizens want the information to be accurate. Lynne MacDonald, of the Songhees condos, says that this is "not a done deal" despite what is implied in marina promotions. And the facts concur: There has been no decision on the lease or from Transport Canada. In fact, John Baird from Transport Canada has agreed to meet with Demise Savoie due to public concerns. The BC Integrated Land Management Bureau, who are adjudicating the developer's lease application, continue to accept public feedback on the marina and will consider it in their final decision - which is still pending.

Community Marine Concepts is taking environmental stewardship on the marina and hired Chatwin Engineering limited to assess any potential impacts of the marina. However, Brian Emmett, a local scientist, did a review of the assessment for Denise Savoie and found that the assessment does not consider viewscape impacts or that the massive dredging will resuspend anoxic sediments, thus lowering oxygen levels and possibly endangering the fish. In a Times Colonist Letter, Richard Brunt says that an average yacht "produces 2200 pounds of carbon dioxide an hour."

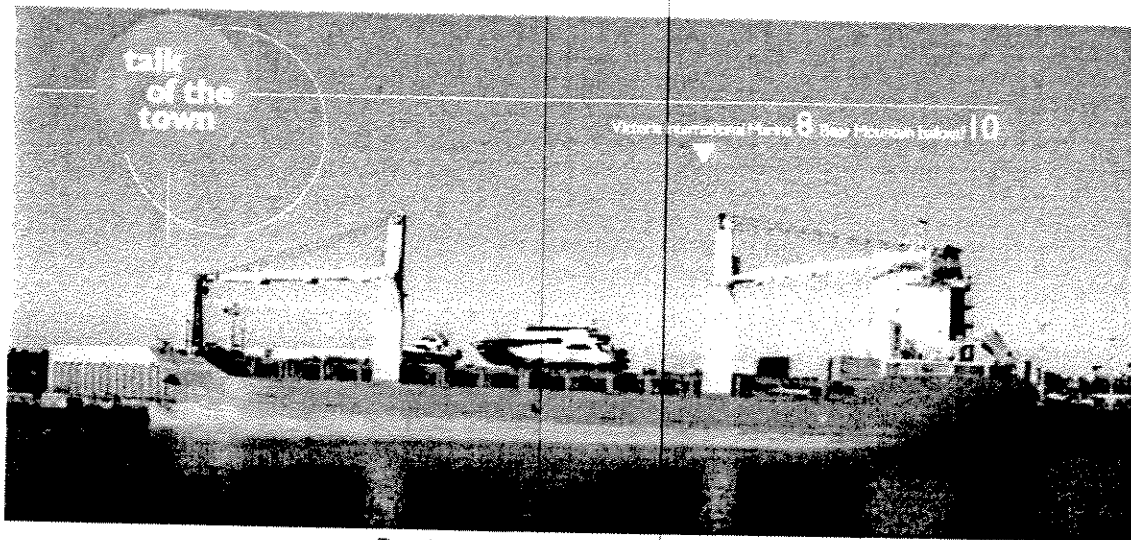
Is a large marina the right fit for our quaint and picturesque harbour? Emmett says that the marina is "not an appropriate use of public space" and not suitable for a residential area. He feels that it is the wrong location for a marina of this size and scope. With global warming and the recession, we are going greener and spending smarter. The day of the diesel - spewing luxury yacht might well be over. In the long run, Robert Evans might find it much more profitable to build a smaller marine aquarium with eco-friendly tours and recreation. Whether it is keeping the natural picture or shifting the lens, at the end of the day we need a vision for our harbour where everybody wins. Contact Numbers: www.victoriainternationalmarina.ca, (Evans), doug.berry@gov.bc.ca (BC Lands), mintc@tc.gc.ca (John Baird at Transport Canada).

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The yacht carrier *Federal Patroller* at Victoria's Ogden Pier.

Harbour about to be WAMed?

By Peter H. Lewis

In late February the bulk cargo carrier *Federal Patroller* berthed at Ogden Pier. This was just a couple of days after the public meeting at Victoria City Hall called by Denise Savoie to air concerns about Bob Evans' proposed Victoria International Marina in the city's harbour. Perched high upon the ship's massive, rusting elevated deck were three fiberglass pleasure craft. Judging by the height of their plimsoll line, the small boats were probably the ship's only cargo. Wandering far from its registered home port of Limassol, Cyprus, *Federal Patroller's* mighty 10,000 British horse-power engine was being used to transport three much smaller boats that probably didn't total more than 500 horse-power between them.

For those aware of the details of Mr Evans' dream of a marina for what he calls "mega yachts," seeing this ship and its cargo would have rung a bell: so *that's* what he's talking about. It did for me.

Mr Evans and his financial backer, WAM Developments Group of Calgary (which has at times been represented in Victoria by lawyer, former Canadian Alliance candidate and Gary Lunn supporter Bruce Hallsor), are seeking the federal and provincial approvals required to cover 6.5 acres of water surface in Victoria Harbour with docks able to berth up to 50 pleasure craft ranging in length between 65 and 145 feet. Mr Evans himself has estimated that some of his clients' vessels would be as tall as a three-storey building.

Mr Evans and WAM say there is a "lucrative" opportunity in the mega yacht marina concept. Among their basic rationalizations for the project is the fact that the owners of large yachts can now have their boats shipped to and from ports around the planet via yacht carriers like the *Federal Patroller*. According to Victoria International Marina, "In 2005, yacht carrier ships brought approximately 34 large yachts to Victoria from the Caribbean, Florida, and California. In 2006, four carrier shiploads doubled the amount, and in 2007 approximately 12 shiploads were scheduled. Crew and owners then boarded the yachts for cruising on the west coast. With the Victoria International Marina, Victoria will now be able to host these mega yachts in our harbour over longer periods."

My gosh, they make it sound like the Coast is about to explode with

mega yachts, don't they? Note that it's not that *ownership* of mega yachts is exploding amongst Victorians, Vancouverites or even Seattleites. No, Mr Evans asserts that these ships will be brought here by yacht carriers and that's key to his business plan.

On the basis of these unsubstantiated and somewhat dated claims, Mr Evans is attempting to justify the permanent privatization of a significant chunk of one of the city's most vital commons: its harbour.

It's easy to find small things to quibble with in Mr Evans' claim that this project would bring great economic benefit to the community in exchange for its seizure of part of the harbour. For instance, the season for comfortable pleasure boating on the West Coast of BC lasts precisely two months: July and August. So Mr Evans' marina would have at most a one-season impact on the local economy.

But there are larger points to make about Mr Evans' claims of economic benefits that ought to be explored. Since 2007, things have undoubtedly soured a bit for Mr Evans' dream of a mega yacht explosion. A lot of potential mega yacht owners have lost their jobs with Merrill Lynch, Lehman Brothers et al and are simply out of work and won't become mega yacht owners after all. But let's examine his greatest claim, that 12 shiploads of mega yachts arrived on the Coast in 2007.

By the way, I didn't see them; did you? Now the shiploads Mr Evans refers to are not really shiploads of the 65-145-foot-long behemoths for which he's planning to build his marina. You can go online yourself and see what's out there and what's being moved about. The *Federal Patroller* might even jump up on your screen. Overall, I'd say VIM is perhaps doing a wee bit of exaggerating. But heck, that's commonplace amongst the boating set. Believe me, I'm one of 'em.

So let's grant him his 12 shiploads. My guess is that his wildest dreams involved no more than 200 boats a year, all different sizes, only a few of which could really be called "mega yachts." Two hundred boats a year spread over two months (our pleasure boating season) is 100 boats a month. That's a little over an average of three boats a day if boats spread out as boaters are apt to do. And look, we all love our post-card pretty little city, but its charms aren't so great that they would hold any

of these boats here for long. It's a fabulous coast and includes places like Vancouver and Seattle. So how long to stay in Victoria? A couple of days here for each boat? So even at peak season, Mr Evans is really looking at a marina with perhaps six boats tied up at his docks at any one time. Why does he need a marina that would accommodate 50 boats when one that accommodates six is going to turn the trick?

But here's a more essential question: What kind of process would allow the permanent privatization of a vital part of the commons without requiring the party seeking the privatization to justify publicly and in terms that could leave in no doubt the value to the community of that privatization?

The answer to that question has been provided recently by Ms Savoie who, you will recall, called for a public meeting as a result of the large number of people that were contacting her with concerns.

The 350 concerned citizens who packed themselves into Ms Savoie's standing-room-only meeting, probably unaware of the *Federal Transporter's* imminent arrival, expressed a range of concerns: Paddlers said the marina would restrict access to one of only a few areas specifically designated for non-motorized craft. Nearby residents and walkers reckoned their view of the harbour would be blocked. The 4000 truckloads of possibly contaminated sea-bed that would need to be dredged were dumped on Evans' dream. Others questioned the sheer scale of the marina, as I do.

Mr Evans called the February 17 meeting at city hall "a publicity stunt" and blamed Songhees realtor Lynn MacDonald for stoking unrest among a small but vocal group of former clients who purchased condos from her in the area.

But in an op-ed piece published in the February 25 *Times Colonist*, Ms Savoie zeroed in on the deeply-flawed approval process. She wrote:

"The federal government holds the responsibility of protecting the public interest but Transport Canada, the lead agency reviewing this project, has refused to hold or attend a meeting to hear from the public. Transport Canada has preferred to rely on information from the private developer.

...It concerns me that Transport Canada is relying on the developer to identify the public's concerns. I have had businesses, community associations and First Nations complain to me, on the record, that they are being misrepresented as supporters of the project, that job creation and economic spinoffs are being exaggerated and that claims that they were consulted are inaccurate.

...Former prime minister Joe Clark recently stated that for too long, our country has been run by private-interest governments. The approval process specific to the marina project demonstrates that not only is the public interest not considered first and foremost but, in fact, it is not being considered at all.

Transport Canada's position is indefensible in terms of the public interest. It might meet bureaucratic rules but it does not meet the needs of the community. This must change."

In other words, we don't have a process that expects a private party to justify publicly why they should be given the right to privatize a part of the commons before they are given that right. They merely need to ask for it, and if they're well-connected politically and financially, they'll get it. And the community gets WAMed.

Writer Sam Williams is a former boat and home builder.

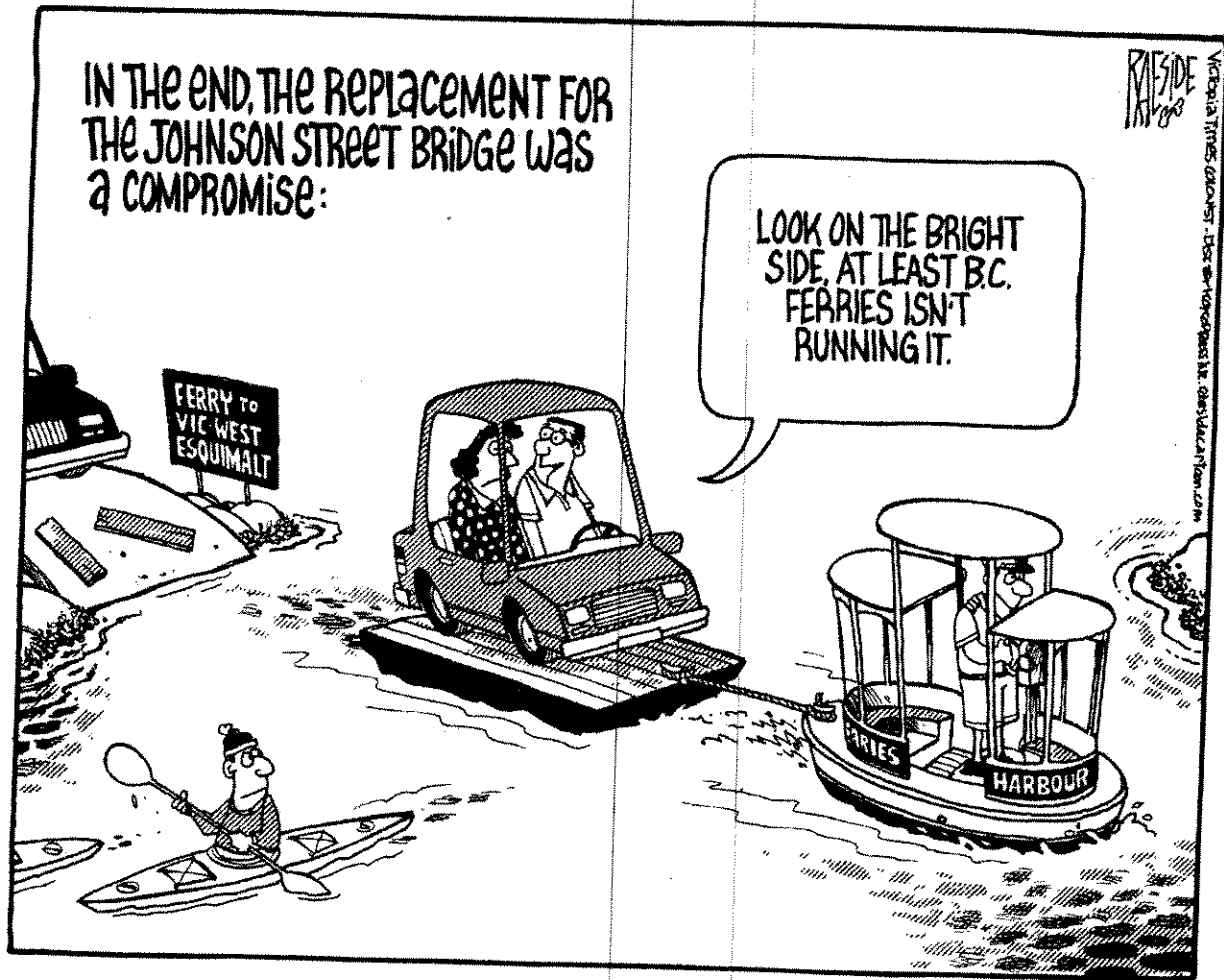
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Mega-yacht marina plan faces public scrutiny

By Carla Wilson, Times Colonist April 4, 2009 6:52 AM [Comments \(1\)](#)

The federal government, after lobbying by Victoria MP Denise Savoie, has agreed to call a public meeting to discuss whether a controversial mega-yacht marina should be built in Victoria's harbour.

Savoie said she expects the decision to hold the meeting will delay the issuing of federal permits for the proposed \$20-million marina, which features 48 berths for large luxury yachts in front of the Songhees area.

A Transport Canada spokesman could not be reached for comment yesterday.

The New Democrat MP said yesterday she won Transport Minister John Baird's agreement for the session during a Thursday meeting in Ottawa.

"It seemed to me that there were no answers forthcoming for the public on the very real issues that the people were raising."

Savoie had earlier sought a government-hosted public meeting, and when that didn't happen, she and the Vic West Community Association held their own meeting in February. Developer Bob Evans, who is working with Western Asset Management Development Group of Alberta, followed with a meeting in March.

The government-sponsored session is needed to clarify what's happening, said Savoie, who hopes other agencies will participate.

Savoie said Baird agreed that Transport Canada should consult, prior to the public event, with Savoie and provincial and municipal representatives to clarify the status of assessments required by the federal government.

Permits involving the environment, navigation and First Nations issues need to be granted, she said.

Evans welcomed a inter-governmental meeting to clarify the process and said he would attend if invited. But he is cautious about the public meeting. "If this is another rant opportunity, I don't think it will do much good."

He rejects suggestions of a lack of consultation, saying all levels of government have been involved in plans for the site for more than 20 years.

"We are building exactly what the city asked for," Evans said. "There's a group that just wants to change it again."

Emotions are running high about the marina. Opponents and supporters are accusing each other of circulating misinformation. Public concerns include environmental impact, whether paddlers in non-motorized boats would lose safe access and how views might be affected.

"Most people accept that something can be built there, but it's just a matter of: Is this too big?" Savoie said.

Audrey Whittall, chairwoman of the Vic West Community Association harbour committee, is pleased about having a public meeting. "I think it is needed," she said. She cites the impact of a large marina on the harbour as a major issue. "It is going to turn it from a congested harbour to a congested channel."

cjwilson@tc.canwest.com

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For immediate release
April 03, 2009

SAVOIE SUCCEEDS IN OBTAINING REPRIEVE ON DEVELOPMENT OF PROPOSED MARINA

VICTORIA – Denise Savoie, the Member of Parliament for Victoria, was successful in getting a reprieve in the granting of permits relating to the proposed Victoria International Marina yesterday when she met with Transportation Minister John Baird and other high-ranking officials from Transport Canada.

Savoie has been pressuring the federal government to hold a public meeting and to listen directly to the concerns being raised by her constituents. Yesterday, Transport Canada finally agreed to host a public meeting in Victoria.

“I am very pleased with the actions Transport Canada has committed to take regarding this development,” said Savoie. “However, there is still a lot of work to be done, at all levels of government.”

Savoie argued from the start that it is important the three levels of government work together, especially on such a large development involving public access to Victoria’s waterfront. In yesterday’s meeting, Transport Canada also agreed to meet with provincial and municipal officials.

“It seems like an obvious step in the process, but currently this is not a requirement,” Savoie stated. “As a result, each level of government addresses their own narrow bureaucratic rules without addressing the larger community concerns.”

Prior to a public meeting on the proposed development, Transport Canada will meet with Savoie for a more comprehensive discussion on the status of the required assessments currently being conducted by the federal government, including ongoing environmental and navigational assessments, as well as First Nations consultations that, contrary to what the developer has said, have not yet been completed.

“There has been a lot of misinformation about the project on the part of the developer,” Savoie told the Minister. “This has been the source of much confusion and frustration for the public.”

Savoie has received an avalanche of calls, letters and e-mails from over 700 constituents over the past few months who have raised concerns relating to the environment, navigation issues for non-motorized vessels, public access to public space, viewsapes, and the lack of public input into the proposed development.

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