

Saturna Island Fire Protection Society – An Update

For those of you who are long term residents of Saturna, the following will be familiar. However, the past few years have seen a number of new residents and cottagers and you may be wondering about our volunteer fire and rescue services on the island.

Saturna Island Fire Protection Society (SIFPS) was incorporated in January 1994 as an independent society (meaning we are not owned or managed by the CRD). The volunteer Board of Directors is elected by the membership. All resident and non-resident property owners are eligible to be members. The Board Directors are elected annually at the Annual General Meeting usually held in June. The Board of Directors oversees Saturna Island Volunteer Fire Department and Saturna Island

Saturna Island Rescue (our equivalence of ambulance). There are two emergency buildings – one across from the General Store and one at East Point - and all costs associated with the upkeep and managing of those is paid for by Saturna property taxes.

Fire protection is provided by 20 volunteer fire fighters and a fleet of seven fire service vehicles. The department is rated for exterior attack only, which means they will battle any structural fire from the outside. They also have specialized training for wildfires and a dedicated rope rescue team. Similar to other jurisdictions, all costs associated with providing fire protection is paid for by local property taxes.

If there is a medical emergency, our **SIR** volunteers will respond. There are currently 13 volunteers and two ambulances (one at each building). Important to note, they are Emergency Medical Responders, not paramedics, and will do an initial assessment and determine whether the patient need to be evacuated (water taxi, ferry or helicopter). They do not treat the patient unless it is a first aid issue. Unlike other Southern Gulf Islands, which have BC Ambulance fully funded by the province, Saturna receives no funding from BC Emergency Health Services. **SIR** receives a grant from Island Health, which covers approx. 25% of total costs. The rest is funded by donations from islanders and local property taxes.

This year the property tax requisition was \$170,000. The maximum property taxes the Society can request is limited by a mill rate of 0.86 (roughly corresponding to \$220,000). Our island prides itself on having a strong and dedicated team of volunteers and nowhere is that more obvious in the 40+ volunteers (includes 10 Board members) that have chosen to deliver emergency services on our island.

If you would like further information, go to www.sifps.ca. And if you would like to get involved or have questions, please contact any of our Directors (contact info on website).

Wayne Quinn, President
Saturna Island Fire Protection Society