

January 2019
Talk of the Town
by Mayor Bill Beamish

“Give Local” To Make A Lasting Difference in Your Community

It’s a little-known fact, that, under the *Income Tax Act*, Revenue Canada defines Canadian municipalities as charitable organizations. That means that all four local governments (Gibsons, Sechelt, the Sunshine Coast Regional District and the Sechelt Indian Band), can accept donations and issue tax receipts for gifts over \$25.

It’s an odd concept at first. Give more to the government? Voluntarily? Well, yes, because when donating, you have the distinct pleasure of specifying exactly how you would like your money to be spent.

In 2003, for example, Muriel Haynes donated her home to the Town of Gibsons with the understanding that proceeds from its eventual sale be used for “capital improvements at the Gibsons Pool for the general benefit of the community of Gibsons as a whole.” As a physiotherapist, Haynes valued the therapeutic benefits delivered by an aquatic centre and wanted to ensure future members of her beloved community would continue to enjoy them. Her gift (currently held in trust and valued at about \$195,000) will achieve that goal, while acting as a lasting, tangible tribute to her personal values.

Today, most people would agree that one of the Sunshine Coast’s main challenges is a lack of affordable housing. It limits our social diversity, forces some community members to go without essentials, such as heat or dental services, and harms our economy, as local businesses struggle to find employees who can afford to live and work here.

In response, the Town of Gibsons is actively supporting the Affordable Housing Society and others to build new affordable housing units in our community. We do this in two ways. The first is by providing land, as in 2005, when the Town, with assistance from a number of residents, provided a lot to build the first Habitat for Humanity house on the Sunshine Coast and, more recently, as with a dedicated site on Franklin Road. We also provide financial support through our Affordable Housing Reserve Fund which is largely funded from requisite charges paid by developers.

Residents who share our concern about the negative social effects of high housing costs – and who are in a position to help – should know they can help make a lasting difference by donating money or real property to the Town for this specific purpose. Gifting is relatively simple and may happen now, or later, via “planned” or “legacy” giving, which typically sees a charitable donation made through a bequest.

If you’re wondering how to give back to your community in a meaningful way, please consider making a charitable donation to your municipality. Whether it’s to support the development of more affordable housing or, as in the case of Muriel Haynes, to advance another worthwhile cause that reflects your personal values, future generations of Sunshine Coasters will thank you. If you would like more information about how to do this please call me or talk to your financial advisor.