

## **SAFE supports recommendations of Diamond Head report, urges Council not to rescind EDPA bylaw**

SAANICH, BC. Saanich Action for the Environment (SAFE) supports the recommendations of the Independent Review of the EDPA bylaw commissioned by Saanich Council. In addition, they urge Council not to rescind the existing bylaw while they use the recommendations in the Review report to clarify and improve it.

Ben Kerr, SAFE spokesperson, said, “We support Saanich’s long-term commitment to sustainability and protection of the environment as embodied in the Official Community Plan (OCP), in the creation of the Urban Containment Boundary and many other provisions in Saanich bylaw and policy.” He went on to state that SAFE commended Council for its “foresight and flexibility by initiating the Independent Review, making temporary changes to the bylaw and implementing an appeal process while the Review was being conducted.”

SAFE believes there is broad community consensus on the bylaw’s provisions to protect sensitive environmental areas with respect to rezoning and subdivision applications. They suggest that it has been the confusion associated with the bylaw’s application to single-family properties that has been so controversial and that requires Council’s leadership and focus.

Kerr says SAFE believes it is critical to maintain the protections currently embodied in the existing bylaw while Council works with the community on changes to the bylaw with regard to single-family homes. “Given Saanich’s history of environmental leadership in the Province, it would be a contradiction to remove the EDPA bylaw,” he suggests, as this would result in “elimination of existing protections and long term damage to sensitive environmental areas.” Saanich would have “the dubious distinction” of being the only municipality known to have rescinded its EDPA bylaw if it does so,” he said, and “would impose a larger, protracted, challenging and divisive effort on community, Council and staff at considerable additional cost over what has already been expended.”

The members of SAFE have stated their willingness to work with Council, community and staff to apply the recommendations in the EDPA Independent Review to the existing bylaw, believing this course of action is achievable and desirable for the long-term health of our community and the environment.

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