



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 27, 2015

GIBSONS PUBLIC MARKET: FOOD & COMMUNITY HUB, BUSINESS INCUBATOR, AND MARINE EDUCATIONAL FACILITY

COURTENAY – Public farmers’ markets provide growers with a space to sell their wares, but also serve an important role as incubators for food producers looking to refine their products and develop their businesses. Thanks to the Gibsons Community Building Society (GCBS), the Sunshine Coast will soon have its first year-round, indoor public market.

With the granting of \$400,000 from the Island Coastal Economic Trust, the Gibsons Public Market is now embarking on an ambitious plan to create a permanent space in the former yacht club building which has been a temporary home for the past 16 months.

When complete, the new space will be more than double the size of the existing facility, and will include more than 8,000 sq. ft of community amenity space, in addition to the market space. This will include community and commercial kitchens as well as the Marine Education Centre: an interactive aquarium focused on marine resource sustainability, and particularly, food from the sea.

“This project is all about a community vision,” said Phil Kent, ICET Chair. “Everyone has rallied behind this concept, with significant volunteer involvement as well as private and corporate financial contributions. We are pleased to be able to support an important new economic driver for the region which is so well aligned with community values and aspirations.”

In 2014, the farmers’ market attracted nearly 70 vendors and grossed nearly \$200,000 in sales over the 22-week operating window. When the year-round, indoor market is completed, the group is forecasting significant growth to \$1.4M in total revenue for the vendors.

“Markets like this are incubators for emerging small agri-food businesses, and the impact on communities is so much more than just the availability of fresh, local food,” said Nicholas Sonntag, President of the GCBS. “Our market provides space and amenities that these producers need, and combined with the Marine Education Centre, will become a significant tourist draw as well.”

The commercial kitchen is an important part of the incubator function because it allows new businesses to use state-of-the-art technology and to achieve food safety certification that would not be possible for a

home-based business. The certification allows them to sell their products to a wider variety of customers, including larger grocery store chains.

The Marine Education Centre is forecast to be self-sustaining, achieving a projected 23,000 yearly visits by its fifth year of operation, attracting a large number of visitors who would not have otherwise visited the area.

An economic analysis by ICET found that after five years of operation of the Market and Marine Education Centre, the region will benefit from the equivalent of more than 40 additional long term local jobs and 15 person years of construction employment directly attributable to the project.

Construction is anticipated to begin in January 2016, with completion by summer 2016.

About the Island Coastal Economic Trust

The Island Coastal Economic Trust is a \$50 million endowment established in 2006 by the Government of British Columbia to help diversify the economies of central and northern Vancouver Island and the Sunshine Coast.

ICET is guided by a Board of Directors and two Regional Advisory Committees which include more than 50 locally elected officials and MLAs and five appointees. This exceptional team of leaders collaborates to set regional priorities and build vital multi-regional networks.

Through a community-centred decision-making process, ICET has approved \$49 million for over 135 economic infrastructure and economic development readiness projects on the Island and Sunshine Coast since implementing its grant program in 2007. ICET investments have leveraged over \$276 million in incremental funding into the region.

A full overview of ICET can be found at www.islandcoastaltrust.ca

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For further information:

Line Robert, CEO
Island Coastal Economic Trust
Tel. 250-871-7797 (Ext. 227)
line.robert@islandcoastaltrust.ca

Mayor Phil Kent, ICET Chair
City of Duncan
Tel. 250-709-0186
mayor@duncan.ca

Gerry Zipursky, Executive Director
Gibsons Community Building Society
Tel. 604-886-8814
gzipursky@gmail.com