

## **In praise of going SLOW**

**Do we have the will to create a Pedestrian-Friendly Salt Spring?**

**By Marion Pape**

A Pedestrian Safety Committee meeting was held last Tuesday to examine a Request for Proposal (RFP) for a Neighbourhood Transportation Plan in the Lower Ganges and Rainbow Road areas. Isobel Richardson came as a delegation from seniors and related how more and more seniors who no longer drive, are unable to walk on the uneven ground along the side of the road. She showed pictures of the holes they trip on and emphasized the importance of safe walking trails and a pedestrian controlled crosswalk. The discussion on the RFP to select a consultant to undertake the conceptual design for walking, cycling and traffic calming facilities resulted in some useful suggestions for data collection, process and publicity. This RFP process already has received a funding commitment from Island Pathways ,CRD gas tax transfer , Ministry of Community Services for a Local Govt Planning grant and CRD Regional Planning. Several other partners in the area will be contacted for additional financial contributions.

It is important to understand that the Ministry of Transportation (MoT) is the authority for facilities along the road right of way including crosswalks, speed limits etc. A proposed Transportation Commission will focus on sidewalks and bike lanes along the side of the road on highway right of way. CRD staff is currently working on an establishment by-law for this new Commission which will require Ministry of Transportation (MoT) approval.

But here is another thought. As our seniors have more and more difficulty getting around, it is ironic but not surprising that the number of cars being registered on the island continues to increase as is evidenced by a baseline data update of the Salt Spring Energy Strategy. Traffic volume and speed is growing and together we islanders need to find ways to slow it down as well as reduce the number of vehicles on the island. Peter Lamb and Gary Holman agreed to write a letter to MoT about lowering the speed limit in Ganges. Several suggestions were also made about lowering the speed limits throughout the island. This would make sense from a safety and energy conservation perspective."

The conceptual study draft and final study will be completed in time for OCP input. The pedestrian safety committee will be presented, and provide input into, the conceptual plan. The next meeting will be publicly advertised.

The seniors took on the safety issue of crossing Lower Ganges Road in the Lady Minto Hospital/GVM areas and have made an important step towards energizing the community to create pedestrian friendly villages on the island. Others are lobbying for lines to be painted on the roads and roundabouts to be constructed. If everyone who is concerned would keep up the lobbying efforts, perhaps we will get some much needed improvements in addition to the planned pedestrian upgrades in Ganges.