

Thanks Rod.

Hi, Good evening Thanks for coming out tonight. What a beautiful night to hang out at the docks with friends.

I want to start by acknowledging that we are on the traditional territory of Stz'uminus First Nation. We are so fortunate to live work and play where we do.

This has been a very successful year and we should celebrate that but we should also acknowledge and celebrate the vision and tenacity of the volunteers who set the stage for the success we enjoy. Some of them are right here in this room. The partnership with the Town of Ladysmith and the building of the Welcome Centre fundamentally changed LMS and set the course we now find ourselves on.

You know, it amazes me that our little organization can attract 6,000 plus overnight boating visitors in a season to our Community Marina and the Town but that's what we did this past year. The economic impact of these visitors in one season is over \$1.5 million. Add to that the half million or so we spend around Town and that's a significant economic impact for our community.

So why do these visitors come to our docks? Brilliant marketing? Sure with Cheryl Bancroft on the job that's part of it. The beautiful surroundings and our cute little Town? You bet – that too.

October 18 – 20 I attended the Pacific North West Marina Conference in Blaine Washington. There I was told why these boaters come.

Did you know that most boating destination decisions are made by women? And that 56% of the time that decision is strongly influenced by the cleanliness of the washroom facilities?

We have clean washrooms but so do other marinas so why out of the 400 marinas in the Pacific North West is our little community marina ranked in the top 10? That's right – in the top 10. I would call that quite an accomplishment?

So why do they come- these boating visitors? The short answer is – YOU – the LMS volunteers and staff.

On the Friday of the conference I attended a session called the *Canadian Track – Hear what is being done right in Canada*. Good thing I was there as LMS was the main attraction. It was almost embarrassing: great facilities, interesting heritage programming, yummy food, wonderful festivals, Music nights, hand painted banners, flowers everywhere, a ride into Town and back, always someone there to grab a line and show you around, friendly, friendly, friendly...

Definitely an "A" - top rating – You should give yourself a round of applause.

Yes well worth celebrating.

But the LMS mandate isn't just about operating a great marina. Our mandate is to serve the community. On that I would give us a "C" Don't get me wrong, in some areas we are doing a good job: great festivals well attended by the community, the Welcome Centre has become a community destination, wonderful heritage vessels and heritage programming, our education program is growing and, of course we provide reasonably priced moorage for a segment of the community and more...

But I challenge us to think about what we can do to be more inclusive, to use the facilities and resources we have to serve the entire community on both sides of the harbour. I suggest to you we can do a better job.

There are 153,000 children in BC living in poverty. That's a shameful statistic. Over 20% of the children in Ladysmith are living in poverty. How can that be? One in five kids here is living in poverty? Could it be that some of these kids don't get out to Kids Pirates Day because their mom can't afford the lunch or transportation costs? I think so. Over 500 families a week make use of the Laff Pantry which really acts like a second food bank. Perhaps we need to reconsider who we are talking about when we say community.

Do we really need to charge for a kid's hot dog? Would we be serving the community better if we found a way for these families to fully participate in the events of the day by providing free transportation and free food? We can do that. Are there families who would love to get out on the water but can't afford the price of the harbour tour? Sure there are. We can change that. Do you think there are kids that would love to try kayaking, paddleboard or sailing but can't even imagine how that would happen? We can change that. Build a Dinghy programs can be a great way to bring seniors and youth together to share their love of boating or how about Town kids and First Nation kids? We can do that. Are there seniors who can't get down to the docks who would love a couple of hours by the water? I bet there are. We can change that.

And there is so much more we could be doing to serve all sectors of the community.

The building of the Welcome Centre fundamentally changed LMS. It's time for another fundamental change. No I am not talking about the building of new facilities – something much harder – the building of relationships. LMS needs to be working much closer with our other community organizations like Rotary, Kinsmen, The Resource Centre, the Food Bank and Laff and others to better serve the community. And there are opportunities with local businesses for progressive partnerships. Our relationship with the Town and Council is not what it should or could be and it is time we get serious about serving what we refer to as the other side of the harbour. Perhaps we should just say the Stz'uminus First Nations members of the community because that's who we mean.

You know I don't see a lot of First Nations boaters in our marina. Very few First Nations folks stroll the docks, take part in Dine on the Docks or attend Kids Pirates Day. Could it be they don't feel welcome? Are there other barriers? With the exception of Shirley's education program I don't think we are doing a very good job of reaching out to them, of making them feel welcome. Maybe it's time to stop talking about them and start listening to them. Maybe we can work together to make the community better for everyone.

The development and implementation of the new Ladysmith Waterfront Plan is perhaps the greatest opportunity LMS has ever faced – an opportunity to provide input, resources and direction to ensure what happens on the waterfront remains focused on serving the entire community. Consider what LMS brings to the table: a large active volunteer base, the largest active membership base in the region, a financially stable and well run organization, a tremendous reputation within the boating community, the opportunity (as a charity) to attract funding for the Waterfront Plan; substantial knowledge of the waterfront and visitor opportunities and more. The problem is we are not at the table at least not in the way we should be.

There is a very strong partnership between the Town and Stz'uminus First Nation and that partnership is driving the Waterfront Plan – its design and implementation. If LMS hopes to influence development in the harbour, then we need to earn the trust of the Town and Stz'uminus and be at the table. My sense is that there is a substantial level of respect from those two partners for LMS for what we have accomplished so far but if we hope to play a key role in the Waterfront moving forward then we need to start acting more like a community organization and less like a marina. That's the challenge I put to you and me and specifically to your new Board.

Does this mean we abandon our marina in favour of social work? Of course not. In fact over the next eighteen months we will be investing close to \$500,000 in upgrades to the marina including a new pump out system and a

complete replacement of C-dock. Our marketing to visitors is well underway and there will be more exciting programming on the docks. But in all we do I am challenging you, I am challenging me to think of the whole community and what the concept of service really means.

Someone asked me recently why I spend so much time working on the issue of abandoned vessels. Some of that time is on the clock for LMS, much of it is time I take away from my family. I don't do that lightly. When I walked into a meeting with Transport Canada, Fisheries and Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard last week in Vancouver I was one of the best prepared participants in the room and I can tell you everyone knew of Ladysmith, our abandoned vessel issue and of the efforts of our members and staff over the last four years to address this issue. I am hopeful that the new federal legislation is a step in the right direction however the federal government must understand that it will require a substantial financial investment from the federal government to clean up the current mess as well as the proposed new process for holding boat owners accountable for the disposal of their vessel moving forward. Also missing from the proposed legislation is any mention of liveaboard vessels of which there are hundreds up and down the coast including some right next door. In an instant a liveaboard vessel can become abandoned and sink as was the case with the Annapaya and in some cases that could be an environmental disaster. You can't ignore the people who live on these vessels or stick them all in one category but you also can't ignore the threats to our community and our environment posed by abandoned, wrecked, dilapidated and some liveaboard vessels. That's why I spend so much time on this file. This is a community issue and I was hired to lead this organization in service of the community.

LMS is such a great organization. Our volunteer base is the envy of other marinas and other community organizations. Our staff Debbie, Marc and Deb and our summer staff are second to none. I want to single out Marc and Deb for a minute who, in addition to making this the most successful year in the organization's history, also dealt with a flood that took them out of their office for three months and doubled the amount of work they had to do. They are the first ones to grab a snow shovel or walk the docks at 3:30 in the morning looking for intruders. I depend on them and trust them. Thank you so much.

I am not going to attempt to thank every volunteer by name but at the risk of offending someone I do want to mention a few: Anne Newell for an excellent job managing our membership program, Cheryl and Ches, Fern and Emily for making Dine on the Docks a success, Sherry for her amazing work at the bar, Rod MacNeil for his work in the shop, on the tour boat, managing the Ambassador Program and just in general for being around so much, Art & Betty and others for a successful Heritage Boat Festival, Gerry for his leadership on Kids Pirates Day; Shirley – I can't say enough about how important you are to LMS and to me and how wonderful your volunteers are, thank you; Rob Pinkerton for his work on the tour boat and the abandoned vessel file, his wife Trish for our beautiful banners, Tom and Jim and others for their work on the docks and fingers; Ewan for his electrical work on the pedestals and Martin for feeding the work parties; Nicki and Christanne who helped with recycling for the Purple Martin fund; and a few advisors behind the scenes: Jim Phillips on the C-dock and breakwater projects and the abandoned vessels file, Keith Gillanders for his endless hours of work on our new pump system, Doug and Barrie for your help on a number of files – glad you've joined the Board, our HOSTS and Festival volunteers, the Dragonboat ladies who volunteered throughout the year, the guys in the shop - C. A. Kirkegaard is going to be amazing but also for your work in general around the organization and finally the outgoing Board for your work and support. In particular I want to recognize Paul Nowlan and Allan Gould who are leaving the Board. Thank you for your work throughout your term as a Director.

So, here we are: successful but more work to do at our community marina and as an organization with a mandate to serve the community. Lots of opportunities in a very exciting time. I hope you are as energized as I am cause I

need you to continue the good work you have been doing and step up to take on more. I have a list – come see me, I'll buy the coffee.

Thank you.