

Hydro lets Keats community salvage shed

West Howe Sound

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Demolition begins on the Keats Island BC Hydro shed. - Tony Flynn Photo

Keats Islanders say it's a win for believers in zero waste and the Three Rs, but it was a close thing.

BC Hydro is set to build a new storage shed for its equipment on Keats, and that means tearing down the old one – and some Keats residents were dismayed when they heard the plan was to simply knock it down and cart the material off to a landfill.

Ian Winn, Sunshine Coast Regional District director for West Howe Sound, started hearing about the concerns late last week. He said a group on Keats had already expressed an interest in using things like the roofing and beams, and thought arrangements had been made.

“[The contractor] showed up to remove the building, but they had no intention of saving any of the material,” he said. “Something got lost in the translation between BC Hydro and the contractor.”

Winn, and the Islands Trustee for Keats, Dan Rogers, were able to help get work halted until Hydro and the contractor could sort out what was supposed to happen.

“BC Hydro will be providing Eastbourne Community Association with metal roofing material and exterior canopy beams, salvaged from the demolition,” BC Hydro’s Karla Louwers told Coast Reporter. “We adjusted the demolition plan and schedule to ensure the specific building material could be salvaged and gifted to the community association with future benefit to the Keats Island community.”

She said demolition began March 22, and the new building is scheduled to be complete by June.

Community association president Tony Flynn, who was one of the first people to raise concerns, said he’s grateful that Hydro was willing to step in quickly and correct the mistake. He also said the association hasn’t decided how to use the salvaged materials yet, but they have some options in mind. They include a storage shed for firefighting equipment, and a recycling depot.

Buddy Boyd of Gibsons Recycling, a long-time zero waste advocate, also got involved in the effort. He said it’s giving some new energy to the idea of creating a zero waste program for Keats and Gambier, and it’s a good sign that attitudes, especially at the government level, are moving closer to having salvage be the norm for building demolitions, not an exception.

“We could see a regional district or Islands Trust pushing for some protocols,” he said. “Here’s a perfect example. If we had strong zero waste policies in place, there would already have been a protocol [for what to do] on Keats.”

Boyd said he’s also hoping the situation with the shed will spur efforts to establish a small-scale zero waste program on the island.

“I think that the stars kinda got lined up here, and everyone stepped up,” he said.

Winn said the next steps down that path will start with an informal meeting involving Boyd, Rogers, Flynn and some Keats residents.

“I’m looking forward to whatever the Keats Island folks can do on a zero waste initiative,” Winn said.

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