

Restrictions keep island life sustainable

Dear Editor

While Michael Mehta has an interesting proposal for tidal-turbine powered desalinization (Oct. 23), there is I think an "ah! but" to his idea. And the "ah! but" is, do we really want limitless supplies of freshwater on the island?

The answer I think is no, the reason being that the Islands Trust with its preserve and protect mandate; the Agricultural Land Reserve protecting land that's actually not much good for farming; the inconvenience of the ferry system (better ferries but no bridge?); the high price of land and lack of affordable housing; the resistance to any idea of a piped-water supply, centralized sewage system, or any other urban convenience (don't mention Weldwood); the creation of a large park in the centre of the island that scarcely anyone uses....all these are tools that we use to manage "development" meaning of course population growth.

Without the management of population growth, sustainability is surely impossible. Although Canada restricts immigration, we're not allowed, yet, to require Gabriolans to have a Residency Permit, so we have to use the tools that we have. And spreading the word that water is in short supply on the island is one of those.

What the rest of the world is going to do about population growth, I don't know. I don't see even a tiny fraction of the world's military spending being used to give the world's women a decent education, perhaps the most effective tool there is for making the world a better place. Meanwhile, the population keeps growing and every addition makes a new demand on the world's finite resources, and it's no different for our tiny microcosm.

Whether Thomas Malthus and the Club of Rome are right or wrong has yet to be seen. All we have at the moment is the halftime score, and as with the perennial lack of action on climate control, it's not looking good.

Sincerely