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*Elizabeth May*  
Member of Parliament / Député(e)  
Saanich — Gulf Islands

*Circonscription*

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October 28, 2022

To whom it may concern,

I am writing in support of the 'Salt Spring Island Men's Shed Pilot Year Project' application. This initiative is very welcome in my riding of Saanich – Gulf Islands. It is fitting on Salt Spring Island, where there is a strong sense of community responsibility. I can already envision residents of Salt Spring taking advantage of the services to be offered by the Men's Shed, and the very positive symbiotic relationship that will result from that.

My office is in the practice of referring constituents to places where they can seek help. Many people that we talk to are experiencing poverty. Services for men in my riding are generally lacking, and there is a growing homeless population on the Island. The Men's Shed would occupy a very meaningful space on Salt Spring.

This organization has a crystal-clear vision of what they intend to provide in the community, and how they intend to achieve their goals. The benefits to the community, and to the individuals who will participate, are significant. The Men's Shed comes from a strong family of brother-organizations which will act as models for how to proceed. They are prepared, properly oriented for success in the community, and deserving of the funding necessary to make this project a reality.

As a project geared towards men, this proposal may run the risk of being perceived as reinforcing gender stereotypes of woodworking and construction. Being a space for men only, the focus on seniors shifts that lens. As I have already noted in this letter, social services and critical resources for men in our community are lacking. Safe spaces for conversation, creativity and growth are more important than ever. The 'Men's Shed', despite its name, is intended to be an inclusive space for learning and gathering for those with shared interests in creating. Rather than enforcing traditional stereotypes associated with the trades, this project has the potential to create a space to challenge these stereotypes and nurture collaboration, vulnerability and connection.



An additional concern for many seniors in my riding and across Canada is social isolation. This issue has become more prevalent in senior communities with the COVID-19 pandemic. By providing a space for creative work and community-building, the 'SSI's Men's Shed Pilot Year Project' could bring together our most vulnerable and isolated elders to work on projects that bring them joy or contribute to our community. While there are limitations within any gendered approach to community-building, 'Men's Shed' initiatives have a long history of community impact and positive outreach.

Thank you for your consideration to this initiative.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Elizabeth May". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Elizabeth" and the last name "May" clearly distinguishable.

Elizabeth May, O.C.

Member of Parliament, Saanich-Gulf Islands

