

## Weekly Question

Please take a moment to answer our poll.

Will you join the petition (available at On The Edge and Spin Cycles bike shops) to improve Highway 101?

YES  
 NO

Vote Now!

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## This week's photo:



Ian Jacques Photo

**BACK THE CAT:** Dr. Dan Dolden unveils the new total \$1,136,000 for the Back the CAT fundraising campaign for a CAT scanner during a celebration Tuesday afternoon at St. Mary's Hospital.

## Top Stories

### News

[Public resistant to new development](#)

[Tax rebate for ferry commuters](#)

[Public health warning at Armours Beach](#)

[Gibsons teens die in crash](#)

### Editorial

[Thinking outside the Disney box in Dawson Creek](#)

[A senseless tragedy](#)

### Sports

[Crushers perfect at provincials](#)

[California, Hawaii top international field](#)

## Top stories for the week of July 14 - 20

# CNI acquires 3,286 acres *Feature Story*

Ian Jacques/Editor

Abbotsford-based Columbia National Investments (CNI) has recently acquired more than 3,000 acres of land on the Sunshine Coast.

The acreage is in three different locations, with 2,174 of the 3,286 total acres located close to Sechelt — 803 acres at McNabb Creek and 309 acres at Seaside Park in the Port Mellon area.

Plans for each of the locations are in the conceptual stage, said Steve Dunton, CEO for CNI in a telephone interview with Coast Reporter this week. Dunton said CNI is in discussions with potential partners for each project and will work with the provincial government and the Sunshine Coast Regional District (SCRD) on land use.

“Demand for housing is at an all-time high on the Sunshine Coast and the Lower Mainland,” said Dunton. “More and more people are choosing to live outside the Vancouver downtown core and are commuting. We have been working in this industry since 1986 and as CNI since 1992. I have to admit our new focus on the Sunshine Coast is one of the most exciting projects of our careers.”

Dunton said the “vision” is to create affordable, family-oriented, environmentally-friendly housing.

SCRD head planner Judy Skogstad confirmed this week they have had a few discussions by phone with CNI, but could not elaborate any further. She did, however, confirm the lands purchased by CNI were previously owned by AJB Investments Ltd.

## Sunshine Coast

Mindful art from renowned artist

Getting cash for trash

Whirlwind tour in Ottawa

## Entertainment

Fiddlers to host Belgian dancers

Stories of a singing sleuth

New play features quirky characters

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## **CHIEF**

Visit The Chief, for everything you need to know about what's going on in Squamish, B.C., and surrounding area.

## **Question**

Visit the Whistler Question, for everything you need to know about Whistler, B.C., and surrounding area.

## **PEAK**

Visit the Powell River Peak, for everything you need to know about Powell River, B.C., and the upper coast.

## **Lillooet News**

Visit the Bridge River Lillooet News, for everything you need to know about Lillooet, B.C., and the upper coast.

AJB acquired the lands from Canfor and had plans for a proposed gravel mine near Chapman Creek.

The permitting process started in late 2004. AJB received considerable public outcry over their plans, including a packed meeting at the Seaside Centre on Dec. 2. Since then, AJB has not publicly spoken about their plans or any progress with their permits. When Coast Reporter attempted to contact representatives from AJB for comment, phone numbers were no longer in service.

Dunton said AJB admitted to them they had problems in the community with their land issues.

“Other friends in the area turned us on to this possibility,” said Dunton. “Through our negotiations with AJB they did say they made some mistakes with the community. We certainly recognize those concerns and we hope this is a better situation for all going forward.

“I understand it’s going to take time to earn that trust back. You don’t necessarily get rid of the animosity by becoming part of the community. We want to do this in a professional manner and we’re looking to create a sustainable development.”

CNI currently has 10 ongoing projects in Mission, Chilliwack, Cultus Lake, Abbotsford and now the Sunshine Coast. With a large owned-land base surrounding Vancouver, CNI and its partners have plans to build 30,000 new homes over the next decade.

Dunton said CNI is committed to creating smart growth, responsible developments and providing unprecedented green space in the communities they build.

“This is a huge undertaking and won’t happen overnight,” Dunton said. “I want to get fully involved in the community, even so far as to look at transportation issues on the Coast. I know that is a major concern already and the community will be asking that question when they see a development of this potential. Whether it’s a better ferry service or a land link or a bridge link, I want to see what we can do to make things better. The Sunshine Coast is a great area. We want to take care and ensure that any development becomes an asset, but doesn’t stand out. We want to be part of the community.”

CNI has been working on acquiring the land for the last three months.

CNI is owned and managed by Dunton and his brother Herb. They were born and raised in Victoria and have been business partners since shortly after high school back in the late 1970s, according to information provided by the company. After working together on various house building and land assembly projects, they began to collaborate in the real estate investment and development business.

Dunton said now that the land has been acquired, CNI is continuing to work on its concept plans for the project. “We’re now refining that vision and we’ll make that public as soon as possible,” he said. “We have approached the province and had discussions with the SCR. We hope to have a positive working relationship with both sides.” Coming from Victoria, Dunton said he feels he understands what the Coast wants and wishes to work with the community.

“We’re looking to create affordable, quality housing,” he said. “And we don’t want to do something that is going to change the whole area. Maybe you’ll see some housing and the rest of that particular parcel of

land as green space or park land. By doing it right on the Sunshine Coast we're helping the entire province and Lower Mainland with a huge housing shortage.

"This really is a large piece of land and a great chance to start anew with a great blueprint. We're looking forward to seeing what we can do. We need to find the right developer who understands what the Coast wants and needs."

He added that just because the land has been acquired doesn't mean something will happen right away.

"We don't want to rush this. I understand people will have concerns. We want to take our time and address all those concerns," he said.

"I know some people might not agree with what we may plan to do, but if it's done right, it will be comfortable for everyone. We certainly have the experience to do that."

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## News

- ***Public resistant to new development***

SILVERBACK

- ***Tax rebate for ferry commuters***

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

- ***Public health warning at Armours Beach***

GIBSONS

- ***Gibsons teens die in crash***

ACCIDENT

## Editorial

- ***Thinking outside the Disney box in Dawson Creek***

CATHIE'S COMMENTS

- ***A senseless tragedy***

OPINION

## Sports

- ***Crushers perfect at provincials***

SOFTBALL

- ***California, Hawaii top international field***

OUTRIGGER RACES

## Sunshine Coast

- ***Mindful art from renowned artist***

WORKSHOPS

- ***Getting cash for trash***

STUDENT CHALLENGE

- ***Whirlwind tour in Ottawa***

CHORALATIONS

## Entertainment

- ***Fiddlers to host Belgian dancers***

GIBSONS

- ***Stories of a singing sleuth***

BOOK REVIEW

• ***New play features quirky characters***

DRIFTWOOD PLAYERS

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