

Hopeful premier talks Island issues



Mickey Nishi, manager of Esquire's Coffeehouse, poses for a photo with Ed Mayne, Liberal leadership candidate, on Feb. 9.

Ladysmith Chronicle

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Published: **February 14, 2011 5:00 PM**

Liberal leadership contender and former Parksville mayor Ed Mayne made a stop in Ladysmith on Feb. 9.

Mayne was back on the Island after touring the rest of the province.

His campaign, Mayne said, is going better than he expected.

“We’re starting out from zero if you think about it. Outside 20 miles from Parksville, no one knew who Ed Mayne was.”

While some of the other candidates had been pushing new sign ups, Mayne said it was not the focus for his team.

“Our idea was people who came to us we told them to go online or signed them up, but we never bothered.”

Mayne just scoffs when asked about the recent trouble in the Liberal party after it was discovered a cat and WHL hockey team were both signed up as members.

“Why can’t we just get refocused back to the issues,” said Mayne, who predicts more issues will come to light.

“If it proves to be more, then I think we’ve got to look at it.”

Being the only contender from the Island, Mayne said the one issue at the top of his mind is BC Ferries fares.

Mayne said he thinks they are playing politics with the fare increases, given how they were announced in the middle of the campaign.

“This has been apparently on the table since last September.”

Mayne said it doesn’t make business sense to increase the price because volume is going down.

Mayne said he feels the ferry system is part of the road system and Islanders should not be penalized.

“We (the Island) haven’t been getting our equal share in a lot of areas and this is one of them.”

The fare increase is also having an impact on tourism to the Island, especially when it comes to RV traffic.

Mayne said the tourism industry has taken a lot of hits over the last few years, with the economy, dropping U.S. dollar, HST and the disbanding of Tourism BC.

“It’s death by a thousand cuts,” said Mayne

“All those things dramatically affect the tourism business.”

In terms of industry, Mayne said he is pleased to see B.C. wood heading overseas and would like to see further relationships opened in places like Japan, China and India.

“We are changing a whole mind set there. They didn’t build in wood before.”

“We can’t rely on the U.S. market for a number of years now, so we’ve got to find it somewhere else.”

When it comes to the forestry industry, Mayne sees a concern when it comes to the amount of new skilled labour coming on scene 10 to 15 years down the line as workers retire.

“We are not attracting young people into this business.”

Mayne is now back home to tour the Island before the big vote on Feb. 26.