

HERITAGE

What will become of Elkington House?

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HOLIDAY GIVEAWAY

Support local and maybe win something!

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BUILDERS

North Cowichan finally hears builder concerns.

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LOCAL POLITICS - COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT VS LIP-SERVICE

Are your elected officials upholding policies for engagement or minimizing them?

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POVERTY PLANS - THE HIDDEN COST OF CLIMATE INITIATIVES

Cowichan's Middle Class at a Crossroads

In the Cowichan Valley, a stark divide shadows the sunlit streets: Climate policy's burden on the middle class.

As the community transitions into a preferred retirement haven, over half of its residents savour retirement's leisure, many turning to climate activism. This demographic, comfortably affluent, readily invests in the environmental cause. In stark contrast, the rest of Cowichan's populace grapples with a different reality.

The town's median age mirrors the retirees' enthusiasm for climate service. Such civic engagement, while commendable, emanates from those ensconced in financial security, allowing them the privilege to champion sustainability without personal sacrifice.

Meanwhile, the middle and lower-middle class confront a dire economic landscape where property values have soared, tripling in a short span, against the backdrop of wages that barely budge. For these families, climate initiatives translate to debilitating taxes and financial burdens, overshadowing their daily struggle to make ends meet.



Photo: WWIND file photo

This escalating cost of living compels families out of their generational homes, into micro-apartments, as they're priced out of their own community. North Cowichan's council's green agenda, though noble, casts a shadow on these economic hardships, inadvertently crafting a 'poverty policy' for the middle class. Climate change measures, intended to unite, now deepen socioeconomic divides.

The valley prides itself on inclusivity and championing diverse perspectives, yet, the government's response to middle-class concerns seems paradoxically exclusive. As voices for economic survival rise, they are often muted or marginalized by the louder, more palatable chorus for climate action—leaving many to question if their plight is acknowledged.

Are climate change policies unwittingly morphing into poverty policies? It's a question echoing through the streets of Cowichan. The burden of these initiatives falls disproportionately on those who can least afford them, inadvertently fostering a divide where unity is most needed.

A path forward involves crafting policies that are environmentally ambitious yet economically sensitive. This could mean introducing sliding-scale taxes, providing energy retrofit grants to lower-income households, or tiered environmental fees that take household incomes into account.

Cowichan Valley stands at a crossroads, with the opportunity to blaze a trail for inclusive climate policies that dignify both the planet and its populace. To nurture a community that prospers on all fronts, our leaders must craft policies that reflect the diverse realities of all citizens, not just the privileged. Only then can we achieve a sustainable future that doesn't compromise our middle class but uplifts it.

By **Staff**

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COMMUNITY INPUT ALLOWED BUT IS IT ACTUALLY DESIRED?

North Cowichan Mayor and several councillors may be in violation of the community charter and standards of conduct

North Cowichan steams full-bore ahead on its climate agenda, public input appears to be a point of contention.

As another council meeting went underway, Mayor Rob Douglas of North Cowichan decided to go off-script from the Mayor's report, delivering a speech that left many residents feeling uneasy.

"I would like to take a little bit of a different approach with the mayor's report this evening. During our recent council committee meetings, there has been a significant amount of discussion around this table about North Cowichan and plans regarding climate change" - Mayor Rob Douglas.

The Mayor opened the October 18th meeting with a prepared speech. The speech was delivered after a previous council meeting where Mayor Douglas stopped the public input to gain control of a resident speaking to the Climate Action & Energy Plan (CAEP).

"I'd like to start with the climate action and energy Plan. This initial Climate Action Energy Plan was developed with over 400 residents participating" The mayor explains, *"The updated Climate Action Energy Plan outlines almost 40 actions grouped under seven categories to reduce emissions by 80% by 2050"*

The Climate Action Energy Plan (CAEP) has been the subject of passionate public debate, as the plan is funded by a 0.5% tax implemented in North Cowichan. From community feedback, most residents have no idea they were paying into this fund. At the time of writing this article that fund had grown to nearly $700,000.

The present North Cowichan council appears to have a singular point of interest, the climate. From road use, industrial zones, committee appointments, homes, and local businesses, the CAEP appears to be the overarching policy which drives all of North Cowichan.

With the CAEP becoming the guidebook for local policy and governance, many residents have taken interest in local politics to better understand these policies which are affecting their homes, businesses, and families. This is encouraged by some council members, others not so much.

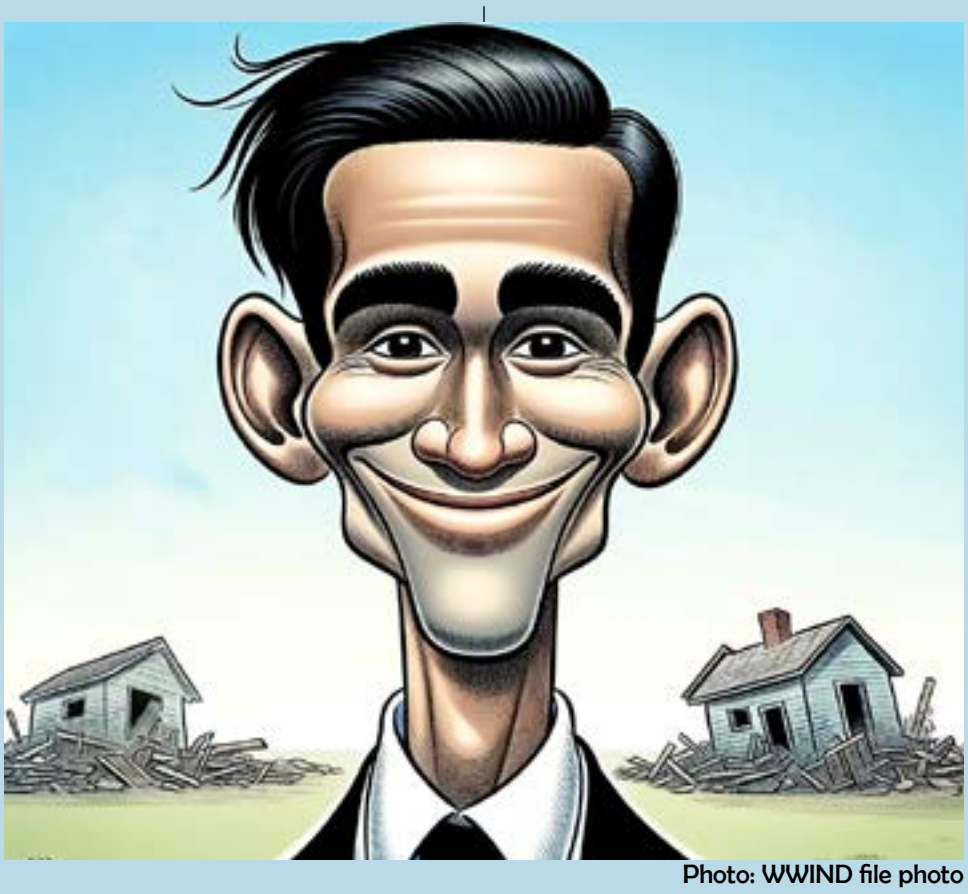


Photo: WWIND file photo

North Cowichan follows a standards of conduct policy, a list of varied expectations for our local elected officials. The mayors report, a nearly 10 minute lashing, appears to violate multiple conditions within this policy.

Most notably North Cowichan's commitments to promoting public confidence, respecting diverse perspectives and interests, holding primary duty to the public, as well as facing challenges of the day.

"I just don't understand where this is coming from. It feels like I've been completely gutted from the inside-out." - Local resident who lives on Herd Rd.

After the 2022 municipal election the community of North Cowichan voiced several concerns regarding the lack of engagement. With a population of nearly 35,000 residents, it's an area of concern when only 8,546 participated in voting. As a result of the abysmal turn out, the mayor was elected with just 3,503 votes. The 6 council members found their place at the table with as many as 4,361 for Councillor Mike Caljouw, and as few as 3,142 for Councillor Chris Istace.

While most residents see these numbers as something to build upon, others would perhaps prefer if municipal politics remained as a 'boys-club' for North Cowichan's elite.

Several policy statements within North Cowichan suggest the duty of officials is not only to give room for public input, but also require them to consider the viewpoints and act with fairness and impartiality.

Mayor Rob Douglas spent approximately 10 minutes delivering his message, the theme clear for anyone with opposing views, your viewpoint isn't wanted at this council.

"The majority of us here are committed to continuing North Cowichan climate change efforts over the course of our term, and we're clear on that when we ran for office."

"If your goal for us is to totally abandon these initiatives I would suggest your best option is to try to elect a different council in the next election."

"For any members of Council that have a different view on the matter, I would suggest bringing forward a notice of motion to repeal or revise our climate action Energy Plan."

As the Mayor concluded his speech the room was noticeably quiet. The usual banter and discussion of topics fell to the deafening silence. No resident, nor councillor looked to the room or one another. Everyone sat with their heads down to digest the message delivered to the community.

We had the opportunity to speak with a resident and obtained his views on the meeting -

"I'm new to the table, I really don't even know where to start. I work 2 jobs, we struggle to pay our bills, trust me when I say the last thing I want, is to be at some government meeting all night." Our local Herd Rd resident explains.

"After that speech by the Mayor, I guess I shouldn't bother. My input, thoughts, needs, whatever don't matter at all. The Mayor just told everyone if you have grief with the current policies wait 3 years and vote differently. Alright, but what to do in the meantime?"

Smaller municipalities are trying to determine what their role is on the national or global stage. As communities strive to increase voter turnout, what impact will the Mayor's speech have on community engagement?

Does the message from Mayor Douglas promote community engagement, diverse views, and opinions? Is this speech encouraging or discouraging?

Perhaps just as importantly, does the viewpoint align with North Cowichan standards of conduct policy:

Policy Statement 1.3 (d): *Valuing the role of diverse perspectives and debate in decision making.*

Policy Statement 1.2 (d): *listening to and considering the opinions and needs of the community in all decision making and allowing for respectful discourse and feedback.*

Policy Statement 3.2: *District Council Members and Committee Members are expected to act with accountability by listening to and considering the opinions and needs of the community in all decision making and allowing for respectful discourse and feedback.*

Policy Statement 2.3: *Council Members and Committee Members must avoid conduct that is an abuse of power or otherwise amounts to improper discrimination, intimidation, harassment, or verbal abuse of others.*

Is there a conflict in interest? Mayor Douglas informed the public their diverse perspective is not majority in this elected council, so not welcomed? Council won't consider your different views or seek to understand them?

For some, this message resonates as; participation in local government is discouraged, especially if it's diverse. How will this increase voter turnout, how does this encourage all community members to have their needs represented on council?

By **Staff**

PRESERVATION OF ELKINGTON HOUSE

A Battle for heritage in North Cowichan

Maple Bay, North Cowichan

Elkington House, a historic gem dating back to 1894, holds the distinction of being North Cowichan's only designated heritage house.



Its preservation has become a matter of concern for the Oak Park Heritage Preservation Society and heritage enthusiasts in the region. Westward Independent recently had the opportunity to speak with Mr. Gowland, a representative of the Oak Park Heritage Preservation Society, to delve into the challenges surrounding the preservation of this remarkable piece of history.

Currently owned by The Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC), Elkington House stands on a three-acre parcel of land surrounded by the natural beauty of Gerry Oaks. Typically, NCC-owned lands are inaccessible to the public. However, Mr. Gowland suggested that if this parcel were transferred to the municipality, it could become a public attraction, providing a space for visitors and locals to appreciate and enjoy its historical significance.

The Oak Park Heritage Preservation Society secured over $350,000 in grant money from the Canadian Economic Recovery Infrastructure Program, which they state would be more than sufficient to address immediate preservation needs, such as the roof and windows. Unfortunately, The Nature Conservancy has imposed restrictions, requiring that the house and land be owned by a government entity or a well-established non-profit with expertise in heritage building preservation before any renovations can commence.

The Society initially reached out to the province, but they displayed no interest in taking ownership of the property. Subsequently, discussions were initiated with the municipality of North Cowichan. While the staff estimated an additional $500,000 for seismic upgrades and other necessary improvements, they did not share a detailed budget breakdown with the Society.

The Oak Park Society has made multiple presentations to North Cowichan, highlighting examples of other municipalities that own and successfully preserve heritage houses. They pointed to Delta as a shining example of a community that actively promotes and protects its heritage properties, emphasizing the historical tours and promotions that enrich the experience for locals and tourists alike.

With North Cowichan lacking similar historical tours or promotional efforts, the Oak Park Society proposed the idea of transforming the Gerry Oak-covered land into a public park while offering Elkington House for community or tourist rentals for weddings, gatherings, conferences, and more.

The primary issue in preserving this heritage home appears to be funding and ownership. North Cowichan, upon receiving the $500,000 staff estimate, believes that the funds must be readily available to obtain the land. However, Mr. Gowland argued that the Society's grant money could significantly contribute to the restoration costs, with additional investments spread over 10 to 20 years.

The preservation of Elkington House has become a focal point for heritage enthusiasts in North Cowichan who yearn to conserve the region's remaining historical beauty amidst a rapidly modernizing society. As the community celebrates its 150th anniversary, the debate continues on how to preserve and celebrate the rich history that is integral to North Cowichan's identity.

North Cowichan has informed us that the cost of making the building usable has significantly exceeded double the grant provided by the society. This is due to the substantial increase in building costs over the past three years. North Cowichan has also indicated that the ongoing maintenance costs for the municipality will only be incurred if the entire amount required to bring the house up to habitable standards cannot be utilized.

Regrettably, they have been unsuccessful in securing additional funding from the province to cover the remaining costs. If North Cowichan considers acquiring the property with the house, they must ensure the property can be put to practical use.

Amid this discussion, the question remains:

Will any level of government step up to preserve this vital piece of its heritage and provide a historical and cultural experience for generations to come?

Only time will tell if Elkington House will stand the test of time or fade into history as an opportunity lost.

By **Adrienne**





UNPACKING THE 30X30 BIODIVERSITY TARGET: GLOBAL PLEDGE OR LOCAL HEADACHE?

The "30x30" biodiversity target is making waves globally, with Canada, like many other nations, pledging to protect 30% of its land and waters by 2030.

But is this global conservation goal really the silver bullet it's portrayed to be, especially when applied to regions like the Cowichan Valley Regional District (CVRD)? In this article, we'll scrutinize the 30x30 initiative, its global implications, and whether it's merely a buzzword for local municipalities in Canada.

The 30x30 target, championed as a game-changer in climate change and biodiversity preservation, has captured global attention. Given Canada's vast land area and relatively small population, it's worth asking if this ambitious target is truly necessary. While the intention is to create a global impact, one can't help but wonder if such goals consider the unique circumstances of every region.

Local municipalities, including CVRD, have been thrown into the mix of the 30x30 initiative. They are expected to play a pivotal role in achieving biodiversity conservation and sustainable development goals. However, as CVRD sets its sights on protecting 50% of its land by 2050, questions abound regarding the land acquisition process and its impact on local residents. It's fair to be skeptical about how these top-down targets will affect communities on the ground.

The CVRD's association with ICLEI (Local Governments for Sustainability) may raise eyebrows. While ICLEI promotes sustainable development, it's vital to question whether such international partnerships truly reflect local interests. As the CVRD aligns with global organizations, it's essential to scrutinize if these alliances are serving the best interests of local communities or following a global script.



Photo: WWIND file photo

Partnerships, such as the one between the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) and BC Climate Leaders, showcase the dependence of local governments on external funds to meet climate objectives. These collaborations highlight the shifting landscape of resource-rich communities, which once thrived but now face the challenges of industry closures. The question arises – are local governments becoming overly reliant on government grants, leaving them susceptible to external influences and priorities?

The 30x30 biodiversity target, touted as a global saviour, faces skepticism when applied at the local level. Local municipalities are navigating a complex landscape of global agendas and financial dependencies. As we scrutinize these initiatives, it's clear that the road to preservation is anything but straightforward and raises valid questions about their true impact on local communities.

By **Staff**





GREEN POLICIES WILL HAVE HOMEOWNERS SEEING RED

Rapid Green Shifts Ignite Homeowner Concerns Over Costs and Freedom

Following North Cowichan's decision to expedite the adoption of building step code 6 years earlier than the Province, with a vote of 4-3, we've contacted other communities to determine whether they are aligned with these so-called "local" initiatives.

We reached out to a contact who runs a citizen's watchdog group in Kamloops and received this letter. It appears that municipalities are uniformly prioritizing global objectives over local necessities. Why does this uniformity exist?

Sound Off: Green Policies will have Homeowners Seeing Red

Like 99.99% of people living on Earth, I want a clean and healthy environment for my children to grow up in. However, I also recognize that idealistic green policies can sometimes have an unnecessary negative impact on our society and quality of life. If you ask me, there must be a balance between the two.

Recently, I was surprised to learn from the media that my balanced opinions are considered dangerous to the future of humanity. According to the CAAD and reporters at the National Observer, I'm suffering from something called "Climate Denialism." They claim that anyone advocating for calm reason and caution when implementing radical Climate Action is somehow a danger to our collective safety. They even go as far as advocating that people like me should be silenced and lobby media platforms to remove content like mine. Similar ideas were recently echoed in City Hall when a representative of Transition Kamloops passionately urged the council to ignore my comments about the glaring issues with the Community Climate Action Plan.

So, what is it that has the green lobby so concerned that they're calling for censorship? It's related to the growing movement of people concerned with topics surrounding Sustainable Development. The term was first used in 1987 to describe the development of human settlements in an environmentally conscious way. Back then, we were clear-cutting forests, there was a hole in the Ozone Layer, and Captain Planet was saving the day every Saturday morning. Intuitively, it made sense that we had to act to protect the environment. But the modern definition of sustainable development has evolved into something entirely different.



Photo: WWIND file photo

According to the United Nations, Sustainable Development is based on three pillars: Social, Economic, and Environmental. We must first adopt the UN framework called the "Sustainable Development Goals" (SDGs) and apply these factors to every decision we make as a society. Only then will we achieve true sustainable development.

Canada, along with 194 other countries, is engaging in a one-size-fits-all approach to saving the planet. For 30 years now, the UN has been trying to fit the round earth peg into the square sustainable development hole, and we're starting to see the predictable results.

A prime example of sustainable development gone off the rails is the war against carbon. This includes strategies like stopping cow farts, banning meat consumption, limiting fertilizer use, and ending the use of all fossil fuels. The government is enthusiastically pursuing carbon reduction strategies that will force BC residents to make significant changes to how we live our lives. This is being marketed as good and clean, with people happily discussing the endless benefits. However, the real conversation should be about whether these changes are necessary, effective, and what negative effects they will have on our lives. No context is being provided.

In January, major news networks claimed that "banning gas" was a wild conspiracy. Well, it's actually written into the CleanBC Road Map. The NDP, in alignment with the UN SDGs and the federal government's commitment to the Paris Accord, is changing the BC Building Code not just to "net zero" but to "Zero carbon" by 2030. They've also identified homeowners with older, inefficient, gas and wood-heated homes as a source of carbon emissions. But don't worry; the government has a plan to save us all from our emissions.

Currently, the government is discussing how to implement a retrofit code to eliminate all these inefficient homes. They have a target of retrofitting all old homes by 2050. As I understand it, the code could be triggered by anyone obtaining a permit for work on their house. It ensures that no work can be completed unless it complies with the new code. Homeowners will be nudged and influenced through onerous fees, regulations, and energy labelling requirements. They will be cajoled into conducting a "voluntary" energy retrofit on their homes. This may include insulation, removing natural gas, installing heat pumps, and EV charging infrastructure, and could easily run into five figures. I doubt that going into crushing debt to fight climate change is high on the priority lists of retirees, young families, and those struggling with the increased costs of everything these days.

The real discussion should be: In the context of a soft economy, a housing affordability crisis, and a shortage of skilled trades, does it make any sense to pursue increasingly costly carbon reduction strategies? I would argue that it does not. As technology advances and costs come down, sure, why not? We can all do our part, but that would take time, technology, and calm reason to prevail. However, the current climate crisis paradigm and illogical arguments for a government-forced transition to a so-called green economy are leading this country into a predictable future with more government, less energy, and less freedom for everyone.

This is why I speak about these issues. There is no context being provided. I'm passionate about these issues because it matters. My motivation lies in leaving a better place for my children in the future, and if that means I must stand up and take some negative press to get there, I'm willing to do it.

You can find out more about the association at KamloopsCSC.org

Geoff Snicer
Kamloops, BC / KCSC Association



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TO ENTER VISIT WWW.WWIND.CA/HOLIDAY

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Keep an eye on your email! If luck's on your side, you'll need to claim your prize in person. It's our way of saying thanks for supporting local businesses. Winners must be ready for a photo op – because your joy is the star of our show.







In an October meeting of North Cowichan Council, Mayor Douglas stated that we would abide by the Climate Action and Energy Plan while the current council was still in their elected seats. He stated that the CAEP would usurp public input or other councillors' opinions that may not align with the CAEP – what does this mean for your future?

1. Outline and cost



1. Compact, complete communities
2. Efficient buildings
3. Low-carbon transportation
4. Local renewable energy generation
5. Renewable energy procurement
6. Efficient water and waste
7. Low-carbon industry, agriculture, and forestry

Estimated cost = $500 million



2. Loss of agriculture

"Without eliminating livestock, agricultural emissions will remain an issue." pg. 40 CAEP

The updated CAEP removed emissions from imported food, but still counts LOCAL food and agricultural emissions.

3. Loss of vehicle ownership

- The total remaining (70%) vehicle stock turns over to low and zero-emissions vehicles.
- Vehicle trips are all but eliminated by 2050 in the CAEP Update as we transition to active mobility (walking, rolling, scootering) by 2050

"Gasoline is all but eliminated by 2050" pg. 35 CAEP





4. Home Retrofits

- Old homes replace gas furnaces at the end of life with Heat Pumps
- Old homes are retrofitted to meet efficiency standards
- "Decreased energy use in existing homes thanks to energy efficiency retrofits and switching from fossil fuel and electric baseboard heating to heat pumps decreases total residential energy use 44% by 2050." pg. 31 CAEP
- What would your old home cost to retrofit?

5. Energy usage

Despite all vehicles being electric, and all homes retrofitted with heat pumps, NC expects " In 2050, total energy use across the community is 35% less " pg. 29 CAEP



6. "Compact Communities" - AKA 15 min cities



- The majority of these so called "emission reduction" targets are met under the idea that most people live in very compact communities, and live in small apartments instead of "polluting" single family homes.
- The Compact way of life in these 15 min cities is supposed to meet all your work and amenity needs.

DEBATING THE FUTURE OF FARMLAND: B.C. CONSERVATIVES' STAND ON ESTUARY FLOODING

John Rustad is the current leader of the B.C. Conservatives. Mr. Rustad has visited the Cowichan Valley multiple times to inquire about, and look into, the flooding of the Cowichan Bay estuary that has become such a hot button topic.

Mr. Rustad has brought forward the concerns around the flooding of the farmland to the Agriculture Minister (Pam Alexis) on a couple of occasions. Previously Minister Alexis had stated that she knew nothing about this project, however her ministry had been involved in discussions. It has been revealed that the Agricultural Land Commission (ALC) had been contacted by Nature Trust, but had not gone through the next steps to fill out an application with them.

At the Legislature on October 24th, once again Mr. Rustad questioned the Agriculture Minister.

Tuesday, October 24, 2023 – Question Period

J. Rustad: Weeks ago this NDP Agriculture Minister was caught red-faced when she claimed she was unaware of the impending flooding of prime agricultural land in the Cowichan Valley. Can the Minister of Agriculture please explain why her NDP government was prepared to ignore the ALC and its mandate in order to turn 100 acres of food-producing B.C. Farmland into a marsh?

Hon. P. Alexis: There are pressures on agricultural land all across the province, and I recognize the importance of preserving suitable agricultural land so the B.C. Agriculture sector can continue to grow in terms of food security, economic activity and community strength throughout the province. The ALC has a mandate to preserve agriculture land and encourage farming that can include both traditional agriculture and on-farm value-added activities. The project that the member mentions would require a non-farm-use application to be granted by the ALC. And as of today, no application has been made.

J. Rustad: It's interesting that this government has given $1.5 million for the project without even asking for the application. Clearly this government is prepared to destroy productive farmland. And right now there are thousands of acres of marginal agricultural land available in British Columbia where homes could be built. To the Minister of Housing, why is this government more concerned with creating homes for ducks than creating homes for people?

Hon. R. Kahlon: I appreciate the question. You know, when I travel throughout the communities, I hear from people who say: "Well, you know what? We have agricultural land. Why don't we just build homes on it?" In fact, I've heard the Leader of the Opposition suggest something similar as well. Our message to folks is that, that land needs to be used for agriculture purposes. We need to ensure, coming out of a pandemic.. We learned clearly from the experience of the pandemic that having the ability to grow food locally is vitally important to handle pandemics, to handle any challenges, economic challenges, we have in the future. There are ways to build housing that don't touch agricultural land, and that's what we're doing here. We're finding ways to get greater opportunities for housing around transit, built around the infrastructure that we already have in our communities, and we're going to continue to do that work.

Do you have feedback on BC Agriculture? Let us know at editor@wwind.ca





TAMMY'S TIPS!

Oh how times keep getting tougher, so we look to our ancestors for how they made it through the great depression and to some new ideas others are sharing.



Photo: WWIND file photo

I saw an amazing post one day where a person shared a great idea! They were at the end of their jam jar and they added vinegar and olive oil to the jar, and shook it. Something I would have thrown away normally now created a lovely raspberry vinaigrette. This got me thinking, what other things I previously called "waste" could I use? I tried this with my honey jar that still had honey around the edges, what a lovely vinaigrette! I then added two blueberries for further flavour hints.

I had started about 6 months ago keeping my eggshells, drying them for 20 min at 400 degrees in the oven and grinding them in my coffee grinder. I then store them in glass containers to feed a little to my pets, but mostly to my plants. I also do the same with my banana peels, but dry them for longer, sometimes around 40 min, or however long it takes to fully dry them, then grind them and use them for plant food.

I started to realize I could do this for myself as well. When I cut the tops off of vegetables, like carrots, beats, and the like, I wash them, dehydrate them, and then grind them for an amazing green drink. I have also learned the many healing qualities of certain leaves, so I have been cutting all my raspberry and strawberry leaves off for the winter to dehydrate. I then leave them in dried form for teas or grind up for my smoothies. (you can look up the many benefits of different leaves online).

I used to throw away my old, sprouting potatoes, then I bought some potato bags off Amazon, and now I just throw them in with some loose soil and can grow most of the year in the temperate West Coast weather. I have also taken the old potatoes, cut the outer soft skin off (dug out all the 'eyes' aka roots) and diced them up to can in a water bath.

The old saying "waste not want not" has become my mantra these days, as has finding the benefits of plants that I have in my own backyard, for healing and health.

If you have any handy tips, please send them to editor@wwind.ca with the subject line 'Tammy's Tips"

Wishing you a wonderful Fall!

Tammy

NUT BAR: A WHIMSICAL LOOK AT POLITICAL GYMNASTICS

Welcome to "Nut Bar," your biweekly dive into the deliciously ironic world of political acrobatics where every side of the spectrum bends over backwards so much, they might just win an Olympic medal for flexibility.

In today's installment, we're taking a light-hearted gaze at the art of political contradictions that can sometimes leave the common folk scratching their heads in bemusement. So, buckle up as we embark on a merry-go-round of "do as I say, not as I do!"

The Left, The Right, and The U-Turn

In the red corner, we have the champions of inclusivity, who love nothing more than a group hug with Mother Earth and championing the noble steed of social justice. Yet, sometimes, in their zealous jousts for righteousness, they might accidentally unhorse a fellow jouster for using the wrong century's vocabulary. It's a classic case of "knight in shining armour syndrome," where the armour is recycled aluminum, of course.

Swinging over to the blue corner, where tradition reigns supreme, and "if it ain't broke, don't fix it" is the motto chiseled into the grand table. These knights are known for their steadfast defense against change, but occasionally they're caught updating their castle's Wi-Fi for better streaming of "Ye Olde Conservative Talk Shows."

The Social Media Joust

Ah, the grand arena of social media, where every knight from every corner of the realm comes to joust with the sharpest weapon known to mankind: the keyboard. Here, in the thunderous halls of Twitter and the grand courts of Facebook, the "no hate" banners fly high. But beware, for sometimes the quills dipped in ink of "love" scribble out sentences that sting sharper than a bee in one's bonnet.

The Inclusive Exclusivity Club

Nothing says "unity" quite like the Inclusive Exclusivity Club, where everyone is welcome, as long as they agree on everything, always. It's like a potluck where every dish is welcome, but if you bring meat to the vegan feast, you might just be asked to set up your picnic blanket in the neighbouring shire.



Photo: WWIND file photo

The Anti-Bullying Bull

In the green pastures of political correctness, the anti-bullying bull grazes peacefully, inviting all to frolic in harmony. However, should you dare to wave a blue flag of differing opinion, you might find yourself in a bit of a rodeo.

In the end, dear readers, whether you lean left, right, or prefer to stand squarely in the middle, it's important to remember that the world of politics is often a carousel of contradictions. It's all about holding on to your horses (or unicorns), enjoying the ride, and not taking the circus too seriously. After all, isn't life just one big political potluck?

Until next time, keep your nuts and bolts tightened, and may your bar of sanity remain ever high in the nutty world of politics!

By **Staff**

A PEEK INTO PROGRESSIVIA: THE CITY OF THE FUTURE, ONE CARBON CREDIT AT A TIME

Welcome to Progressivia, the city of tomorrow! It's 2045, and the progressive agenda has not just been followed; it's been run with—literally, since running is now the city's official transport (next to e-biking, of course).

In Progressivia, your carbon card is your passport to the world. Want to hop on the hyperloop to the next block? That'll cost you two carbon credits. Dreaming of a steak? Better have saved up your meat rations—only 1.2 meals of meat per week here, and yes, tofu has been in a suspiciously high demand.

The residents are a hearty bunch, navigating the e-bike traffic jams with the dexterity of a squirrel on an agility course. Parking your e-bike is a competitive sport; rumor has it that the next Olympics will feature it, right after competitive recycling.

Housing is 100% sustainable and 50% transparent—privacy took a hit, but hey, the neighbours love your new pajamas. The walls are so green, they photosynthesize, and every home is equipped with a composting toilet—though no one has figured out where the compost actually goes.

As for travel, forget exotic vacations. The farthest you can go on your carbon budget is the virtual reality booth down the street, offering a simulated 'Day at the Beach'—sunburn and sand in your shorts not included.

Progressivia, where the air is clean, the conscience cleaner, and where you'd better pedal fast if you want that last slice of lab-grown bacon. Progress? Absolutely. Just don't forget to log your laughter—it might just cost you a carbon credit.

By **Staff**





THE BATTLE FOR DUTCH FARMS AND GLOBAL FOOD SECURITY: A COVERT AGENDA UNVEILED



Photo: WWIND file photo

In the Netherlands, more than 3,000 farms are currently locked in a struggle for their survival. This plight is not unique to the Netherlands, as farming communities worldwide face similar challenges, from the United States to Australia, India, and across Europe. What's unfolding is a pattern that extends far beyond local issues. Governments in these regions are increasingly influenced by foreign, unelected organizations and powerful corporations, such as the World Economic Forum (WEF) and the United Nations (UN).

Governments are now openly aligning themselves with these shadowy entities, a stark departure from previous years when they dismissed them as conspiracy theories. Notably, the Dutch Prime Minister, Mark Rutte, once denied any connections to the WEF and its founder, Klaus Schwab.

But what is happening in the Netherlands specifically? Dutch farmers are being unjustly blamed for environmental pollution and are being coerced into reducing their carbon emissions. These farmers have invested heavily in their businesses and are among the leaders in adopting environmentally friendly practices. They are passionate stewards of their lands, having cared for them for centuries to provide high-quality, honest food products. Blaming farmers for climate change is an unwarranted scapegoating, as they have been exemplary in their commitment to sustainability.

The turning point occurred when large corporations introduced chemical-intensive practices, such as the use of glyphosate, to increase productivity. This shift favoured big, corporate farms, rendering smaller, traditional farms financially unviable. The government's agenda was clear: promote large farms for easier control and potential future manipulation.

This day of reckoning has arrived, and farmers, along with countless others around the globe, are recognizing the insidious agenda at play. It is an agenda rooted in totalitarian world control, concealed within the UN's Agendas 21, 2030, and 2050, as well as driven by organizations like the WEF and the WHO. It represents a coup d'état on a global scale, orchestrated behind closed doors.

The Netherlands: Government vs. Farmers

For years, Dutch farmers have been subjected to stringent government regulations, resulting in increased costs and reduced efficiency. These high costs have led to a surge in consumer prices, causing distress among farmers. The government has always framed these policies as essential for environmental protection, perpetuated by so-called experts. However, the truth runs deeper. The government's hidden agenda is a war for control over food, land, water, and ultimately the people, orchestrated by self-proclaimed elites, NGOs, and corporations to establish a New World Order.

The Dutch government, under the guise of combating climate change, has laid the blame for carbon emissions at the feet of farmers and other food-producing businesses. Media propaganda has amplified this narrative, attempting to sway public opinion against farmers and distract from the infiltration of corporations intent on monopolizing food production and land acquisition. Financial giants like Vanguard and BlackRock, along with the Gates Foundation, are key players in this endeavour. Bill Gates, the largest private farmland owner in the USA, is simultaneously investing in lab-grown and insect-based protein foods, which could potentially replace traditional farming systems and exert unprecedented control over the food supply.

Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte's revelation in a WEF meeting that the Netherlands is poised to become a leader in producing "Food Hubs" (lab-grown food distribution centers) further underscores the global trend. Governments worldwide, fueled by funding and donations funnelled through organizations like the Gates Foundation and the UN, are paving the way for this system. These plans extend beyond food control; they encompass food, land, and water. Controlling these resources means controlling the population. Gates has invested heavily in food companies in Europe, the US, and Canada, while also supporting vegan and lab-grown meat products. These actions reveal a calculated strategy to dominate the food chain, leaving consumers with little control over what they eat.

The Hidden Agenda: A Massive City Project

The Dutch government has failed to disclose its plan to build the "Port of Europe," a Utopian city called "TRI-STATE CITY HOLLAND" intended to accommodate 30 million people. This grandiose project is not merely an idea but has historical roots dating back to World War II when the Nazi regime envisioned it as the European Nazi Capital. "Tri-state City Holland" is intended to serve as the Gateway to Europe. This massive project will predominantly house a multicultural population, primarily of African origin. The ongoing influx of migrants is part of an orchestrated population migration agenda funded by George Soros and his OSF foundation, designed to dismantle national sovereignty.

To execute this grand plan, vast tracts of land are needed, and it's the farmers who own these coveted lands. The financial stakes involved in building a city for 30 million people are astronomical. Consequently, a false climate change narrative has been employed to persuade farmers to relinquish their lands, much like Canada's use of manipulated water shortage statistics. The Dutch farmers initially believed that political change could alter this agenda, voting overwhelmingly for the "Party for Farmers" (BBB) during national elections. However, post-election revelations exposed BBB's ties to Monsanto, dashing farmers' hopes.

The only political party currently opposing this agenda in the Netherlands is the FVD, led by Thierry Baudet, Gideon Van Meijeren, and Pepijn Van Houwelingen. They are diligently working to expose the influence of the WEF and the UN within the government. People are beginning to grasp the wider implications of this coup, connecting it to other nations with ties to these global agendas under the guise of UN Sustainable Goals.

Water: A Fundamental Resource

The water issue is equally significant in this agenda. The claim that "water is not a human right," as made by the President of Nestle Germany, is indicative of the elites' control over this vital resource. Nestle, under the umbrella of Vanguard and BlackRock, is just one example of powerful entities dominating numerous global corporations.

It's essential to recognize that climate change and water shortages are not solely due to natural causes. Our climate is being tampered with, yet this reality is often obscured by media narratives blaming individuals. Modern technologies like "HAARP" and geoengineering are used to manipulate weather patterns, altering the course of storms and creating droughts and floods. The agenda is to make people believe in an impending crisis and to present the solution as the only viable option. But it's a solution crafted by those who seek to control our land, food, and water.

In recent years, widespread observation of planes releasing chemical substances into the atmosphere has been reported. These substances, including aluminum oxide, barium, and strontium, are sprayed into the upper atmosphere. This has led to changes in weather patterns, often remaining invisible above or within existing cloud layers. Geo-engineering technologies are being used to generate crises, manipulate public perception, and implement preconceived solutions.

People, including farmers, are awakening to this nefarious plan, determined to oppose it. Figures like Rosa Koire, who authored "Behind the Green Lies" on UN Agenda 21, have long tried to warn us. The time has come for change and justice to be served. The infiltrated governments and their connections to the WEF, UN, WHO, and other globalist agendas must be exposed and held accountable, down to local institutions that support their initiatives. The awakening is happening, and we will not allow these plans to succeed.

Ben V - Dutch National

BALANCING CLIMATE ACTION WITH GLOBAL RESPONSIBILITY

North Cowichan's Electric Fleet Purchase, NIMBY, and UNDRIP



Many of the children who work in the mining industry dig for cobalt in the discarded waste (BBC news https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/technology-35311456)



Artisanal miners labor at the Shabara mine near Kolwezi, where 20,000 workers rotate in shifts of 5,000, as seen on October 12, 2022. - Aljazeera.com



Photo: WWIND file photo

North Cowichan has recently utilized its 'climate action and energy fund' reserve to procure a fleet of electric vehicles, including an electric garbage truck. This decision has ignited much debate, prompting residents to question the fund's purpose, and its broader implications for the environment, Indigenous rights, tax usage, and global accountability.

The 'Climate Action and Energy Fund':

The history of the fund, originally designed for emergency use, has come under scrutiny. The opposition to the annual .5% tax from residence to be placed into the fund led to intense budget discussions that included the question; "Should we make taxpayers contribute to the fund that, at that time, had a reserve of $500,000, during such hard times as these?". Despite the push back council went ahead and put over $150,000 more into the fund this past year.

UNDRIP and Ethical Sourcing of Battery Components: The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) was acknowledged in North Cowichan's Official Community Plan (OCP). Requests have been made to postpone vehicle purchases until ethical sourcing of batteries and recycling infrastructure is established. Despite these concerns, a 5-2 decision was reached to proceed with the purchases. This decision is now going to drain the Climate Action Energy Fund almost completely. Do locals know they have been paying into this fund since 2014, just for it to be drained for some electric vehicles?

The Impact of Battery Component Mining and Ethical Responsibility: The extraction of battery components raises environmental concerns, particularly its adverse effects on Indigenous communities. Violations of Indigenous peoples' rights to clean water and a healthy environment, as outlined in UNDRIP, have been noted. Exploitative labour practices in the mining industry disproportionately affect Indigenous communities, contravening UNDRIP's regulations on forced labour and fair working conditions. Additionally, mining operations encroach on Indigenous ancestral lands without proper consent, leading to displacement and cultural disruption, thereby denying Indigenous communities their right to self-determination and protection of their cultural heritage, as guaranteed by UNDRIP.

Advocating for Sustainable and Responsible Mining Practices: Urgent calls have been made for aligning mining practices with UNDRIP principles to safeguard Indigenous communities. Governments, corporations, and consumers are urged to endorse sustainable mining practices, including rigorous environmental impact assessments. Recognizing the importance of Indigenous leaders and organizations in decision-making, along with the development of alternative materials and recycling methods, is essential.

NIMBY Perspective and Global Responsibility: Balancing local climate action objectives with global environmental and social responsibilities is imperative. A more conscientious approach is advocated to ensure that actions benefit not only North Cowichan but the wider world.

North Cowichan's electric fleet acquisition has initiated a crucial conversation about climate action, ethical responsibility, and the impact on Indigenous communities. Striking a balance between local interests and global consequences is vital as the transition to an "all-electric" future proceeds. Calls for ethical practices and sustainable choices that respect the environment and the rights of Indigenous peoples must be heeded. In this context, the NIMBY perspective should catalyse reflecting on global responsibilities, ensuring that actions contribute positively to the broader world.

By **Staff**



Photo: WWIND file photo

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Westward Independent is proud to serve as a platform for community discourse and celebrates the diversity of opinions that contribute to a vibrant community. While we are committed to providing a space for varying viewpoints, publication in our 'Letters to the Editor' does not imply our endorsement of the opinions expressed. We encourage our readers to engage with the content critically and with respect for the diverse perspectives of our contributors.

Dear WWIND,

All Canadians should be concerned about the deterioration of the right to know what is happening in our Canadian government..

Blacklock's Reporter covers government bills and regulations, reports and committees. They reported on Oct. 17, 2023 that the Canadian government is blocking access to information requests which is guaranteed under the Access to Information Act.

Blacklock's reported that:

Federal departments and agencies have filed so many legal challenges to block disclosure of public records the Office of the Information Commissioner has increased spending on lawyers, the Commons ethics committee was told yesterday. "Some government institutions now routinely violate this law on a daily basis," testified Commissioner Caroline Maynard.

The Access To Information Act permits Commissioner Maynard to issue binding orders on federal managers who refuse to disclose records. "Last year I issued 157 orders," said Maynard.

"We now have nine cases where the institution decided to challenge the order and one where they ignored it," replied Maynard.

The worst offenders were the Privy Council Office, RCMP, Department of Immigration, Department of National Defence and Library and Archives Canada, said Maynard. "The information system is broken," she added.

It appears that the Canadian government is the biggest source of misinformation and lacks transparency. If they want Canadian's trust then they should be forthcoming and provide public information upon request, rather than blocking the process.

R McClureit

Dear WWIND,

On Wednesday, October 18th I attended my second North Cowichan council meeting.

We only moved to the island just over a year ago to be near our Adult Children and 11 grandkids. Lately I have become quite concerned at the Council's seemingly disregard for good consultation with the public, and the business community on decisions that have the potential for very long lasting negative results.

One concern is for Building Amendment Bylaw No. 3932 2023 which the Mayor and Council Member's Istace, Justice and Toporowski voted to pass that evening. (Councillors Findlay, Manhas, and Caljouw voted against passing it.) This Bylaw moves the Emission level guideline Step Code up to level 3 on January 1st 2024, and then right away up to Level 4 on July 1, 2024. If I understand it right, Level 4 means that in Apartment style buildings, only Electrical sources can be used for both heating and cooking, or LNG, which I believe may not be a completely viable supply option at this time.

I believe in the Provincial Government's Documents on Emissions control, Level 4 is not needed to be attained for another 6 years. So why did the Mayor and 3 council members ram it through so fast, and without even having good discussions about the impact of this move with the local builders, that I believe Municipal staff had recommended for them to do? It seems to me the Mayor and his three cohorts are obsessed with being the first in the Province to reach upper levels of tight emission controls as their part in 'saving the planet.' But I think in trying to save the planet they are ignoring other very urgent needs in the valley, such as more affordable housing. I have heard that some builders may not move forward with projects because of this new Bylaw. This is a very big worry.

Buyers and renters are already stretched to the max to find something in this valley they can afford. Young people are moving away, as they can't find proper housing here. These are our next generation of workers, and some would be future owners and taxpayers that we are losing from the Valley. Also therefore, we are losing consumers who would spend their money here and help support our local small businesses.

In my 3 minutes to speak that night as member of public, I mentioned that I was wondering if council was pushing this contentious issue through so fast, just to get it done and off the agenda, as I could not see why they couldn't wait a few years and let the builders get some good affordable housing in place first. I want to share that I almost did not speak up at the Oct 18th meeting at all, because the Mayor started the meeting with his Mayor's report, where he basically said that the public who came to speak on this Bylaw might as well know that the Council had already made up its mind. In other words – don't bother wasting your time talking folks. It was really nice of him to make us all feel so welcome.

But he did say another thing that I really liked. He said if we didn't like the decisions the council was making, we can always vote them out at the next election. So I am writing this letter to the editor now to encourage everyone to start paying attention to the agenda council votes on. Look ahead and see what is listed, and if you are worried about the ramifications of that change, then go speak up when you think they are on the wrong track. You enjoy living in this wonderful valley. So don't sit back and let them change it so much that we all will want to move away, but the trouble is, where will we go, as this same thing is happening in Council meetings all over the country.

We already know we have a Dictator for a PM in Ottawa, and I think our Mayor is starting to sound and act like one too. I personally can't wait for the next election to help get him voted out.

P. Cruickshank, North Cowichan

Dear WWIND,

I see that our hopes and wishes have been answered for long waits at hospitals!.

The "Dix Fix" is in! Self help vending machines where you can get harm reduction supplies such as condoms, drug paraphernalia such as syringes, naloxone kits, drug testing kits, and other items at three island hospitals! I didn't realize that condoms were something that you went to the hospital for but I suppose they must if the Health System says they do and includes it in the vending machines. $2,000.00 per month, times 3 hospitals, times 12 months, equals $72,000.00, times 10 years equals $720,000.00 without taking into consideration that the company that supplies these vending machines will increase their rental price with every lease extension.

Under Minister of Health Adrian Dix's watch, our medical situation has become dire. He can't seem to find an effective plan to allow BC Health to have enough doctors and nurses to serve our communities. That should be his top priority.

Saanich Peninsula Hospital recently announced that they no longer could keep their Emergency Room service open at night. This closure affects over 120,000 people who live in Saanich who now have to stretch our overworked ambulance people further by rushing people from Saanich all the way into Victoria to one of the two grossly overworked hospitals there. No amount of vending machine band-aids will cover the gaping wounds that we now have in our healthcare system which has been struggling for many years but has gotten alarmingly worse under his care.

How about if our BC government finally starts to actually fix our broken healthcare system instead of these placebo gestures?

Sincerely,

J. Money

NORTH COWICHAN DEVELOPERS' FORUM

Westward Independent recently had the privilege of attending the North Cowichan Developers' Forum, a pivotal event held at Fuller Lake.

This forum casts a spotlight on some pressing issues within the Canadian housing sector, offering insights into the challenges faced by builders and developers. Despite being a sold-out event, it was notable that there were fewer than 18 non-staff attendees, underscoring the importance of addressing these housing-related concerns.

The featured speaker, hired by North Cowichan, delivered invaluable insights into housing issues and their connection to the role municipalities play in the current crisis affecting builders. While certain factors, such as BC assessment and inflation, are beyond the control of local councils, three critical problems originating from North Cowichan were prominently highlighted:

1. Prolonged Building Permit Approval Times: One of the most glaring issues is the excessively long waiting periods local builders face, sometimes enduring delays as extensive as eight years for their building permits to be accepted. These prolonged delays result in tied-up borrowed funds and escalating interest costs, all due to the ever-changing red tape and bureaucratic hurdles.

2. Incompatibility of North Cowichan's Official Community Plan (OCP) and Climate Initiatives with Housing: Another significant concern is the perceived incompatibility of North Cowichan's OCP and climate initiatives with effectively addressing the housing crisis. Buildings are frequently rejected for not meeting criteria, such as proximity to growth centers or housing unit expansion beyond growth boundaries.

3. Parking Regulations: Stringent parking regulations and building permit restrictions within North Cowichan were also identified as significant barriers for developers and builders.

In discussions with local developers, it became evident that the costs associated with building materials have doubled since 2019. Additionally, other fees, such as connecting buildings to B.C. Hydro, has increased. This financial strain has led to a reluctance among some builders to engage in construction within North Cowichan. Furthermore, the construction of single-family homes is discouraged due to high building costs and the substantial down payments required, further exacerbated by soaring interest rates. To compound matters, one builder mentioned over 300 permits on hold following the imposition of Growth Containment Boundaries in the OCP.

The North Cowichan Developers' Forum served as an important platform to discuss the critical issues plaguing the local housing sector. To create a more conducive environment for builders and effectively address the housing crisis, it is imperative for North Cowichan to streamline building permit processes, reconcile the OCP with the pressing housing needs, and reassess parking regulations. Tackling these challenges is vital for promoting growth and housing affordability in the region.

However, it appears that The Province is poised to override local municipalities. The Provincial Government recently introduced Bill-44, the Housing Statutes (Residential Development) Amendment Act.

The government's stance on the matter echoes an argument put forth by David Eby during his tenure as Housing Minister (2020-2022) and now as the Premier. The bill essentially seeks to address the complications arising from rezoning and excessive regulations. Once enacted by the NDP majority in the B.C. legislature, it will grant the provincial government the authority to override municipal zoning decisions across much of B.C.

This development has raised concerns within the community. The "solution" presented appears to focus on building high-density homes, emphasizing the need to promote "Growth Centres" or "walkable communities" at the potential expense of single-family home living. This shift could drastically alter the look and feel of the once-beloved family neighbourhoods. With developers eyeing opportunities to replace existing single-family homes with duplexes or fourplexes, the character of these communities may undergo significant transformation. All of this stems from a change in perspective on what were once referred to as suburbs, now labelled "urban sprawl," and the characterization of single-family dwellings as environmental polluters.



Photo: WWIND file photo

The move toward high-density housing has also raised concerns about its potential impact on mental health. Numerous studies have explored the decline in mental well-being associated with high-density living. Many individuals and families moved to these neighbourhoods for their quaint, suburban lifestyle, and it is feared that this shift towards densification might disrupt the lifestyle they cherish.

In light of these developments, North Cowichan's focus on directing all building activities into small centres, combined with the provincial government's intent to increase densification efforts, is likely to reshape the overall atmosphere of North Cowichan and the Cowichan Valley Regional District. The changes are already visible in neighbouring areas like Duncan.

The housing landscape in North Cowichan is at a crossroads. While the challenges and controversies are significant, the community's response and the decisions made in the coming months will shape the future of housing in this picturesque region of Canada. Balancing the need for housing affordability with the preservation of cherished neighbourhood aesthetics will be a complex and crucial task for all stakeholders involved.

By **Adrienne**



YORK STREET DINER RELOCATING HOWEVER, CORRIDOR REMAINS AN ISSUE

In our previous edition we covered the closure of the York St. Diner. We're happy to report since then, the business has preservered and will remain open, looking for a new location.

The community of North Cowichan has been voicing worries over conspicuous drug consumption, especially around the York Road/Lewis Street vicinity—a hub for various social challenges and located near multiple schools.

In response, the municipality is moving forward with the appointment of a social planner at an annual cost of about $120,000 to orchestrate its approach to these matters and is pursuing additional financial support from higher government authorities to address the concerns.

York St. Diner updated the community on October 10th on their Facebook page.

"Hello everyone.

We would like to start off by thanking each and every one of you for the overwhelming love, support, and kindness. You have all given us such a huge boost of strength. We have spent the last month working with our staff, doing everything we can, negotiating, planning, and changing some things around to make it work. And we are so pleased to be able to announce that we are going to be staying open! We will be actively looking for new space but we are so thrilled just to be able to stay and continue to serve our wonderful community in the meantime. We are so thankful that we get to continue seeing all of your smiling faces. We feel so blessed and can't wait to show you some of the new things we have in the works.

Thank you all so much for your continued support. It means the absolute world to us, and our staff. We are forever grateful."

We wish York St. Diner success in their upcoming initiatives.

By **Staff**



WHAT WOULD YOU DO WITH $100 MILLION?

In times when making ends meet has become a daily challenge for many in our community, the Cowichan Valley Regional District's decision to earmark approximately $100 million for an active transportation plan strikes a nerve.

While the intentions behind enhancing walking and cycling paths may be well-meaning, they seem disconnected from the pressing realities many of us face.

Let's put this into perspective: We're living in an era where the cost of living is climbing, affordable housing is more a necessity than a luxury, and every penny in our pockets counts. For a number of us, it's a juggling act between paying rent, affording groceries, and managing the unrelenting creep of inflation. In such a scenario, the decision to invest an astronomical sum in a Regional Active Transportation Plan (RATP) is baffling, if not infuriating, to those struggling to make ends meet.

The plan, which includes 80 projects aimed at boosting connectivity through walking and cycling, sounds progressive on paper. But it begs the question: Is this the right priority for our tax dollars? For many residents, the answer is a resounding 'no.' With such a hefty investment on the line, the funds could be diverted to address more immediate concerns, such as creating affordable housing, improving healthcare, or bolstering education—areas that have a direct impact on the quality of life.

This isn't to say that walking and cycling paths are without merit. However, the plan's cost, the ambiguity of its benefits, and the prioritization of projects that seem to serve already well-connected areas are alarming. The RATP's rating system, which dictates the priority of these projects, has been met with skepticism, especially from those in rural areas who feel left behind. For them, cycling to nearby towns remains dangerous, and the promise of future bike lanes does little to alleviate their current plight.



Photo: WWIND file photo

Moreover, the reliance on potential grants to fund these initiatives is a gamble. Grant money is not guaranteed; it's a competitive market, and not every application is successful. And even with grant funding, the question remains: Is a transportation plan the best use of these funds, considering our current economic pressures?

It's difficult to stomach that while we count our nickels, our elected officials are making decisions that seem out of touch with the fiscal anxieties of their constituents. Committing to a $100-million plan under the umbrella of active transportation, without a clear and transparent explanation of its immediate and tangible benefits to the average taxpayer, is a tough pill to swallow.

In essence, this isn't just a debate about transportation; it's a conversation about priorities, about fiscal responsibility, and about the kind of future we're paving—not just with concrete and bike lanes, but with every budget line that defines our community's roadmap. We need to ensure that our hard-earned tax dollars are being spent on investments that will offer us real, substantial returns, not just the promise of a healthier lifestyle that, frankly, many cannot afford to prioritize right now.

By **Staff**

STEEPED IN WELLNESS: EMBRACING HERBAL TEA FOR NOURISHING SELF-CARE



Photo: Skullcap - WWIND file photo





At this time of year when the weather turns cool and wet, it is an enjoyable daily self-care practice to nourish our body and soul with delicious and nutritional herbal tea.

It is a simple pleasure that can be enjoyed anytime, anywhere with reverence, awareness and bliss. Sure you can buy the tea bags from the grocery store, but using organic fresh or dried herbs is so much more fun and rewarding! The herbs, varieties and combinations are endless, and blending special groups of herbs together is easy after a trip to your garden, cupboards or favourite health food store.

I have been growing, propagating, drying and using medicinal herbs for a long time, and I prepare each teapot with an intuitive selection of fresh or dried herbs based on who will be joining me for a cuppa my special tea. I usually incorporate 8-10 herbs each time and during the Summer, most of them are fresh. I still enjoy drinking organic dark roast coffee, and the rest of the time I'm drinking my healing herbal tea, hot or cold.

There's something very special about a delightful and fresh cup of herbal tea, brewed from herbs from your garden. And, I am reminded time and time again about the powerful, gentle simplicity of using Lemon Balm (Melissa Officinalis), she boasts a long list of benefits including calming tension and anxiety, and lifting spirits. Lemon Balm tastes great, and is wonderfully relaxing yet gently stimulating, and a good choice for middle-of-the-day tea. She increases energy in our system by helping to release energy blocks and stress. Lemon Balm is easy to grow and find in our yards, and her common appearance make her a top herbal ally and a much needed herb.

Another beautiful medicinal herb to consider adding is German Chamomile (Matricaria recutita). This pretty herb grows easily, and she has so many benefits like soothing nerves, inducing sleep, and works well for restless and hyperactive children too. Chamomile helps a troubled digestive system, helps to reduce pain and anxiety, may lower inflammation in the body. There is German Chamomile which I grow in the garden, and Roman Chamomile (Chamaemelum mobile) which grows wild on the property.

This year, I finally grew the most popular American Skullcap (Scutellaria lateriflora). She is my favourite for nourishing the nervous system, helping to support emotional conflict, relieves anxiety and worry, and aids in sleep deprivation. She soothes as if being comforted by a warm blanket, good for nervous exhaustion, depression and is safe and reliable. I keep her mainly in pots as she is a fast-grower, and can be invasive with intense root systems.

The last one I'll share is Oats (Avena sativa), a highly valuable cereal grain and part of the grass family. The whole plant is highly beneficial: the seeds are made into oats, the leaves and stems are called oat straw, and bran is the whole oat's outer layer. Oat Straw is a nutritive nervine that is rejuvenating and improves mood, blood flow and bone health. I grow a row of Oats every year and aim to harvest the pods at the right time to obtain sticky Milky Oats. This is the potent, unripe pod of the oat plant and it's best harvested at its 'milky sap' stage. Milky Oats are anti-inflammatory, and cardio-protective, and help with brain health, anxiety, depression and mental exhaustion. Eating hot oats is a great way to start the day too! The whole Oat plant is truly one to be grateful for.

I hope I've inspired you to add the practice of fresh herbal tea to your daily regular self-care pleasures! Herbal tea warms me up on the inside, and I know the herbs are full of nutrients, minerals and goodness that my body craves. During the growing season, fresh herbs mentioned above are abundant.

Herbal tea is a safe, easy way to gently explore the vast world of medicinal herbal teas for nourishing calming healing. I'm passionate about returning to self-responsibility and Nature for our healing remedies, and I love my herbal tea as does my husband.

****

Diana Pink is always happy to connect with others about plants, remedies, healing, growing and detoxing.

Diana can be reached at 250 597-2102
afreshstart@shaw.ca



Photo: WWIND file photo

Meet Cowichan Valley's

WARREN CHASE



Born and raised on a farm, the blue-collar work ethic was steeped into Warren at an early age and with a background in the construction trades, he translates his experience and excellent negotiation skills to ensure his clients achieve every advantage possible in this challenging market. Although he's physically quite weak for a man, he more than makes up for it in cognitive ability, and as a top performer, he has the results to prove it!

Warren is a family man, so when he's not working, he's with his wife and two young daughters. His hobbies include reading and comprehending the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, aviation, woodwork, and Mel Gibson movies – He's happy to discuss any of these topics with you anytime!

RE/MAX
ISLAND PROPERTIES

COWICHAN VALLEY MARKET STATISTICS - OCTOBER 2023

SINGLE FAMILY DETACHED

AVERAGE SALE PRICE

OCTOBER 2022: $807,676
OCTOBER 2023: $783,375 ↓

NUMBER OF SALES

OCTOBER 2022: 42
OCTOBER 2023: 36 ↓

DAYS ON THE MARKET

OCTOBER 2022: 45
OCTOBER 2023: 51 ↑

SOURCE: VIREB MARKET STATISTICS 2023 | WWW.VIREB.COM

Contact Warren for a no-obligation discussion of your real estate needs and allow this go-getter to put his skills to work!

Warren Chase
REALTOR®
RE/MAX Island Properties

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