THE WESTWARD INDEPENDENT

A FREE NEWSPAPER

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FROM OUR HEART TO YOURS: NAVIGATING A YEAR OF POLITICAL WHIMS

CELEBRATING OUR JOURNEY WITH THE COWICHAN VALLEY

Thank You, Cowichan Valley: A Letter from the Heart of The Westward Independent

As 2023 draws to a close and we eagerly anticipate the start of 2024, we at The Westward Independent are taking a moment to express our heartfelt gratitude to the Cowichan Valley community. Our journey as the Valley's unique voice in news began just seven months ago, and it's been nothing short of extraordinary, all thanks to you.

Each letter, interview request, and conversation has been a crucial part of our growth. Your engagement and feedback have not only shaped our newspaper but have also reinforced the importance of our mission in the community.

We owe a special thanks to the many local businesses that have become distribution partners for The Westward Independent. Your support in making our newspaper readily accessible across the Valley has been invaluable. It's through your cooperation that our stories reach every nook and cranny of our beloved community.



Photo: WWIND file photo

Our wonderful volunteers, the unsung heroes of our operation, deserve immense appreciation. Your dedication to delivering the paper, proofreading content, and ensuring the highest quality of our publication does not go unnoticed. You are the backbone of The Westward Independent, and we are incredibly thankful for your tireless efforts and commitment.

We are also immensely grateful to our local printer, a vital partner who handles everything from printing to delivery. Sourcing 100% from within British Columbia, they exemplify the community spirit we cherish – local businesses supporting each other, thereby strengthening our local economy and fostering a sense of unity.

Our journey so far has been filled with stories that matter, issues that need attention, and voices that deserve to be heard. We are more than a newspaper; we are a reflection of the vibrant life in Cowichan Valley. Your stories of resilience, community spirit, and local triumphs have been the essence of our reporting.

As we move forward, our commitment to you remains steadfast. We will continue to be the platform for your voices and a reflection of the diverse, dynamic spirit of the Valley. We look forward to uncovering more stories, shining a light on local issues, and celebrating our community's achievements in the coming year.

So, to each member of the Cowichan Valley, to our distribution partners, our invaluable volunteers, and our local printer, thank you. You've made The Westward Independent not just a newspaper, but a community pillar. Here's to another year of collaboration, community, and impactful journalism.

With deepest gratitude,

Joseph & Adrienne

The Westward Independent

THE WESTWARD INDEPENDENT

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BALANCING THE SCALES: COWICHAN VALLEY'S COUNCIL CONUNDRUM

Are we just seeing one color of the Cowichan spectrum?

The North Cowichan Council meeting on November 1st resonated with the kind of deliberation that reverberates far beyond the council chambers. It wasn't just about who gets to sit where or represent whom; it was about the very essence of representation and the collective voice of a diverse community.

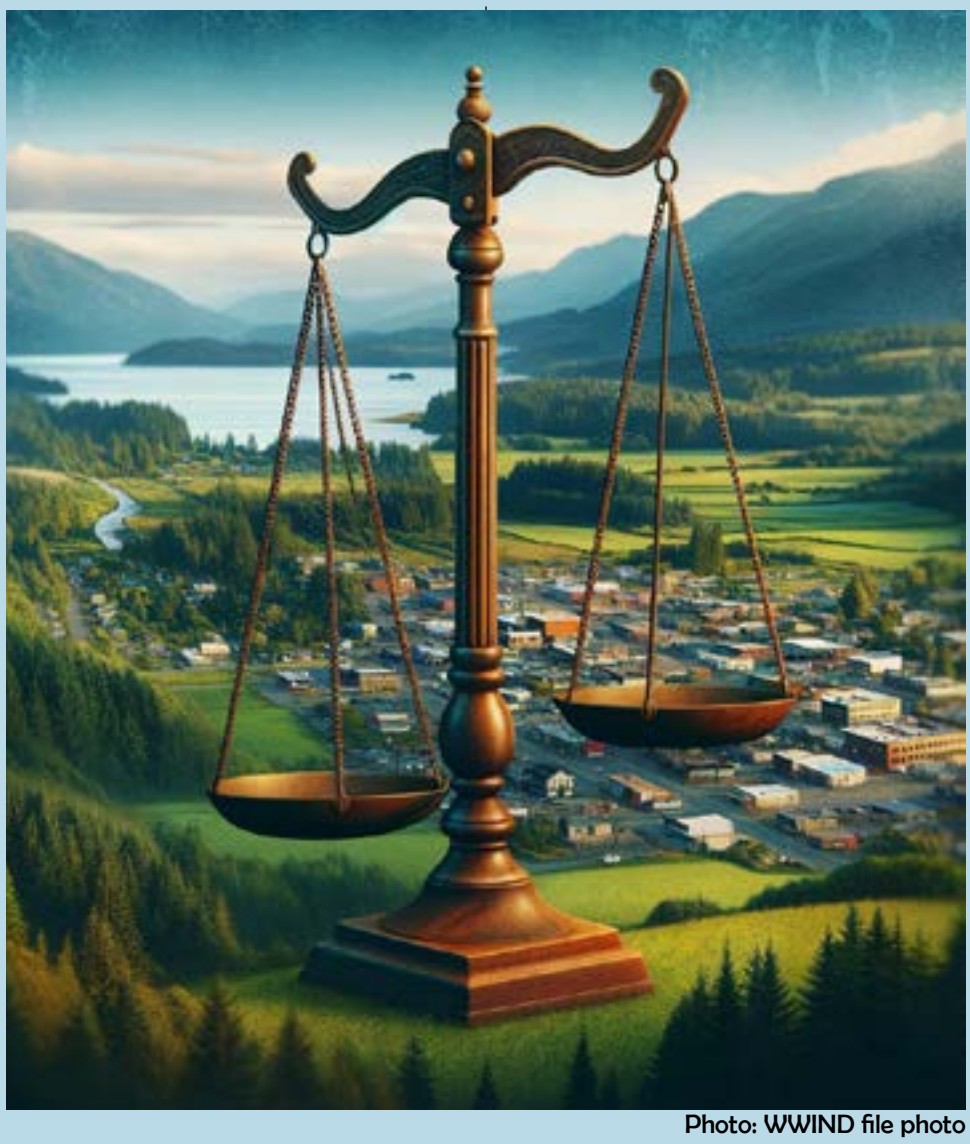


Photo: WWIND file photo

In the intricate dance of local governance, understanding how seats are allocated and decisions are made is key. In the case of North Cowichan's representation on the Cowichan Valley Regional District (CVRD) board, the mechanics are both straightforward and subtly complex. Out of the 16 seats that form the CVRD board, North Cowichan, a significant and influential member, is allocated four seats. This allocation, while seemingly proportionate, becomes a focal point of contention, especially when considering North Cowichan's substantial population and its diverse range of views and interests.

At the council meetings, motions are passed through a simple majority vote, a democratic process that, on the surface, seems to encapsulate fairness. However, when the scales tip heavily towards one perspective – as has been recently observed – the majority vote can become a double-edged sword. It ensures decision-making efficiency but can also lead to a homogenization of viewpoints, particularly when members vote consistently along similar lines. This system of voting, while designed to streamline decision-making, sometimes oversimplifies the complex tapestry of community opinions, leading to decisions that might not fully reflect the diverse voices of North Cowichan.

Central to this discourse was a statement by Councillor Christopher Justice, encapsulating the dilemma of collective decision-making versus individual representation;

"What is important at the CVRD is that the interests of North Cowichan residents are adequately represented, and North Cowichan residents make up about a third of the residents of the CVRD. But we only have 4 out of 16 votes, so we're already sort of underrepresented. You could argue. But here's the thing: If we vote against each other at the CVRD, right, we're cancelling each other's votes, which effectively dramatically lowers our ability to influence decisions and therefore our residents are underrepresented. So I just throw that out there because if we're there to have a strong voice in sustainability issues and we're voting against each other, it's really problematic in terms of representations of North Cowichan citizens' interests."

Justice's words, while advocating for unity, inadvertently highlight a growing concern: the silencing of diverse perspectives. The recent council decision to replace a council member who leans towards fiscal prudence with one inclined towards environmental policies underscores this worry. It's not just a change of guard; it's a potentially unidirectional shift in the council's approach.

This shift, while perhaps well-intentioned in its pursuit of environmental goals, raises critical questions about the balance of representation. The stringent adherence to the Official Community Plan (OCP) and Urban Containment Boundary (UCB) by the council, led by Mayor Rob Douglas, has been both a blessing and a bane.

It's a stand that echoes the mayor's own words over the summer: **"The majority of us here are committed to continuing North Cowichan climate change efforts over the course of our term."**

But what of the voices that echo a different sentiment? The council meetings have increasingly become spaces where community members express their frustrations, often feeling unheard. Their concerns about affordability, development, and the economic viability of their plans seem to dissipate against the firm stance of the majority.

As the Valley moves forward, one can't help but ponder: Will this path lead to a community where all voices contribute to the symphony of governance, or will it morph into a monochromatic echo chamber, resonating only with the notes of a single viewpoint? The irony is palpable – a council striving for representation yet potentially veering towards a homogeneous narrative.

Looking ahead, the residents of Cowichan Valley face a conundrum. As the next election looms, the decision is not just about who sits in the council chambers but about the very nature of those chambers – will they be a place of diverse discourse or a hall of unanimous echoes?

In a region as vibrant and varied as Cowichan Valley, the hope remains that the council will navigate these complex waters with an oar in each hand – one for sustainability, the other for inclusive representation. The future of the Valley, after all, rests in the hands that hold these oars, steering the community through the currents of change and continuity.

By Joseph

CHRISTMAS MIRACLES, OR REGULAR ORDINARY CITIZENS OF THE VALLEY?

North Cowichan, Duncan, and the CVRD is full of caring citizens, who have decided to take care of many of the local community needs, while we ask where the other high paid NGOs and Local Governments seem to struggle being able to figure out how to implement boots on the ground initiatives.

On Sunday December 3rd a new group called Clean Up V9L (can be found on Facebook) hosted a gathering at The Curling Club. The room was overfilled with attendees that stretched all the way down the stairs, showing that the community is extremely concerned about the street crime, those in need of shelter, the greater mental health issues, the suffering of businesses, and the safety of their children.

The meeting's host delivered an impactful speech, highlighting his concerns as a business owner and the challenges his business faces. He emphasized feeling unsafe and urged local governments to recognize that the climate narrative and priorities they advocate for may not align with the majority of North Cowichan residents. Following the host, a mother shared distressing experiences her 15-year-old child witnessed, ranging from drug overdoses to public defecation. She expressed concern about children being confined to campus for safety. Subsequently, a recovered addict who operates The Last Door Recovery Centre on the mainland spoke about their holistic approach to long-term recovery, ensuring housing for individuals upon leaving the center. Serena "Feedombear" addressed the immediate need to support those on the streets due to the lack of warming centers. Cheryl from Life On Wheels, operating without provincial funding, discussed her efforts in detoxing locals and facilitating recovery on the mainland. Cheryl secured a house for detox initiatives and acquired a Winnebago for mobile support, seeking additional volunteers. Night Owls, represented by a couple of women, were acknowledged for their efforts in keeping people on the streets warm through donations of propane heaters and blankets, noting the absence of a current warming center.

The Cowichan Valley is filled with so many kind and caring souls. If you would like to help, donate, or connect with any of these amazing people this season and beyond here are some ways to reach out:

Life On Wheels (Detox, on the street, recovery) -Needed: Monetary Donations, and on the ground help 250-706-2428.

Night Owl (on the street activism to connect with people and keep people from freezing on the streets) Needed: Monetary donations, blankets, gloves, toques, propane heaters, on the street help) Message Sandyy King on FB, or Sara (www.facebook.com/sarah.mckenna.1293) on FB or email mckenna.sarahcoleen@gmail.com.

Meals On The Ground (feed those in need. Mon-Wed and Fri. 5-6 Duncan United) Needed- Volunteers, Cleaners, Servers. claudia1949roland@gmail.com.

Sunday Sandwiches provides sandwich lunches to those who need a meal each Sunday (and stats.) behind the Cowichan Valley Basket Society building (5810 Garden St. Duncan) from 12pm - 1pm in support of the Cowichan Valley Basket Society. Sunday is the one day of the week where there is no access to food for our homeless and those living in poverty. Sunday Sandwiches on FaceBook.

Last Door Recovery Centre in New Westminster Needed: Monetary help. Contact via FB www.facebook.com/LastDoor/

* The CVRD announced the Heritage Hall will open for warming on Dec 11th, this leaves questions regarding available on-site staff. Additionally, there will be no storage for belongings. Those who work with people on the streets have said that these folks will not leave their belongings on the street to go into a shelter as they know they will be stolen and it is often all they have.

By **Staff**



Recently, Life on Wheels, a grassroots, God breathed ministry, has moved ahead at full capacity and has taken another road less traveled; not having government support, but forging ahead regardless. A growing number of volunteers are taking positive action in our Community to create a better life for all. Through meeting many caring and very generous community-minded people we have been given the opportunity to rent a six-bedroom home to offer women who are in addiction, homeless and in transition, to get supportive housing to do a natural detox. They will also receive treatment for trauma, much love and compassion, and many other healing modalities, all sponsored by volunteers who care about helping these women to get clean and off the streets.

We start building relationships with these women when meeting them at Life on Wheels at our sea can and pop up tent, on a Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday from 12-3 on the railroad tracks on Duncan Avenue. Also, we meet our clients through family members, or other support workers who contact us and then do an intake to assess their desire to move forward to get clean and a new life off the streets. We have the capacity for six women at this time in the house along with three house leaders and support volunteers who come daily to run the programs.

In the spring when trailers are in place we may be able to accommodate 3 more. It is our goal to start their journey back to health with them and finish with them after rehabilitation to receive them back into our facility so we become their community of support while they start a better life finding housing, family and possible work or further education.

There is still so much work to be done! We have a further vision to open a faith-based men's sober house and detox facility all run by volunteers. We spent two years gaining experience detoxing men and some women in our trailer ministry outside of Duncan. Very soon we hope to operate a warming center and temporary shelter out of a 27-foot Winnebago to provide relief during the cold months to rekindle hope, faith and love in their hearts.

We are in a humanitarian crisis and more must be done to respond to the opioid and mental health crisis and homelessness in our own community for the benefit of all. These are desperate times that require desperate measures and much prayer.

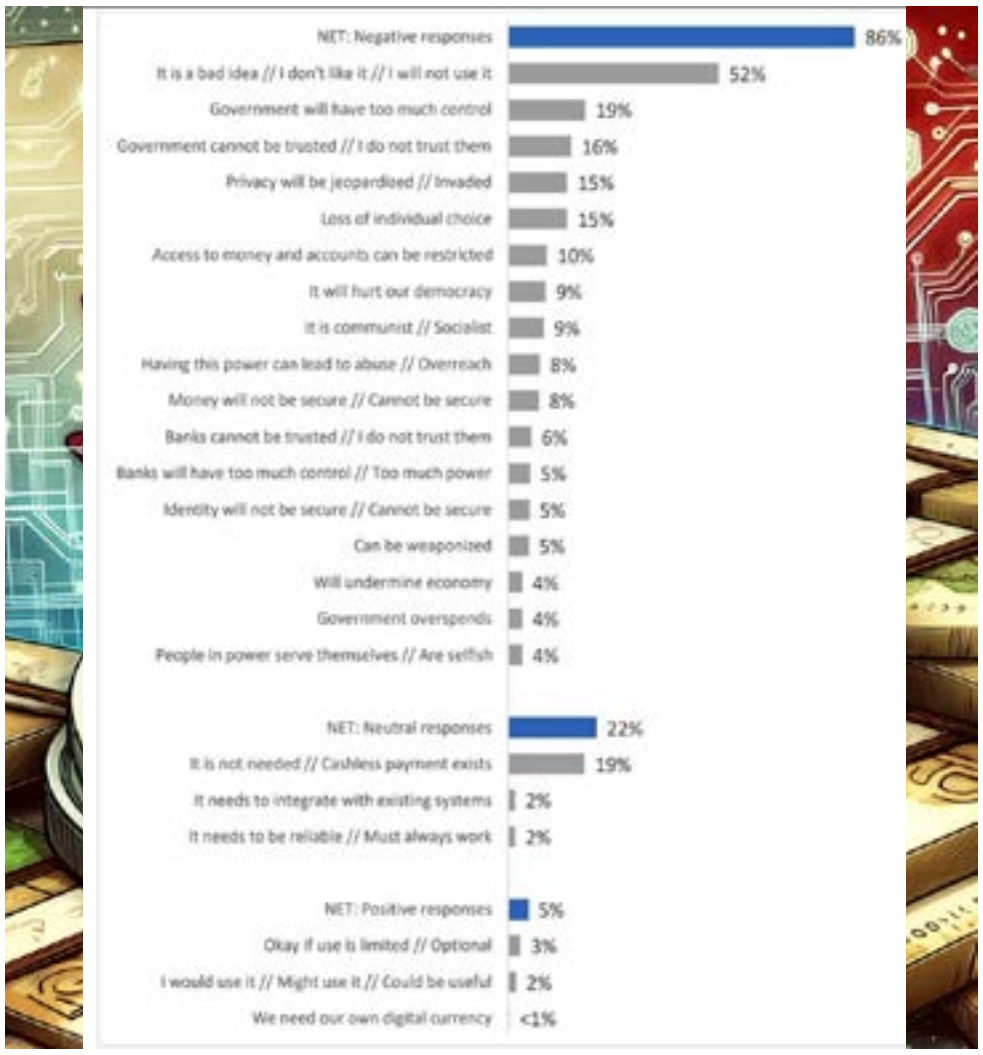
In January, we are planning to reach out to families who have loved ones in addiction by offering weekly meetings to support them in healthy ways.

Submitted by Cheryl Howard, Director of Life on Wheels

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85% OF CANADIANS SAY THEY WON'T USE DIGITAL CURRENCY: BANK OF CANADA REPORT



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What is a CBDC—a.k.a. GovCoin?

The concept of a Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC), often referred to as GovCoin, has been met with skepticism and reluctance in Canada, as evidenced by the Bank of Canada's recent report. Despite the claimed 'potential benefits' of a digital currency, 85% of Canadians expressed their unwillingness to adopt it, according to the survey conducted by the central bank.

A CBDC represents a digital version of traditional fiat currency, endorsed and overseen by a nation's central bank. In the Canadian context, this digital dollar would function similarly to physical cash, but with the added capability of online transactions and electronic transfers. Theoretically, the use of a CBDC could streamline financial transactions.

The Bank of Canada's public consultation survey, encompassing 89,423 participants, revealed a significant resistance to the adoption of a digital Canadian dollar. A staggering 85% of respondents outright stated that they would not use a CBDC, while only 12% expressed potential interest, and 3% remained undecided. Additionally, when asked if there were circumstances where respondents would prefer a digital Canadian dollar over their current payment methods, an overwhelming 92% responded negatively.

But will the Federal government listen to the people or advisors such as Kathy Macdonald, M.O.M., MSc., who is a retired police officer with over three decades of investigative and crime prevention experience? She is the author of Cybercrime: Awareness, Prevention, and Response and a member of the Order of Merit of the Police Forces. She was named one of the Top 20 Women in Cyber Security in Canada. Kathy stated : "The CBDC's traceability could drive cybercrime deeper into the digital world and further complicate the work of law enforcement. As with any major societal disruption—which the introduction of a new digital currency would be—spear phishing, ransomware and social engineering attacks would ensue. The CBDC could also become a potential target for state-sponsored cybercriminals who want to paralyze Canada's financial infrastructure. Canadians should not assume their information would remain anonymous



with a digital dollar. Lastly, a digital dollar would only be available in electronic form, and therefore not considered physical property like cash or gold. This raises the question: Who owns it? If it is by the Bank of Canada and not by the user, the power to restrict or curtail transactions could be taken out of Canadians' hands. This change in property rights could lead to societal chaos, unrest and confusion—an environment in which cybercriminals thrive."

The Bank of Canada's recent report indicates a clear lack of public enthusiasm. Canadians appear reluctant to embrace a digital dollar, expressing concerns about the impact on traditional payment methods, the potential for increased cybercrime, and uncertainties surrounding ownership and control. As the federal government contemplates the future of digital currency, it remains to be seen whether it will heed the voices of the people or proceed with its vision for a digital financial landscape.

By **Staff**

RISING DISCONTENT: ARE CITIZENS REACHING THEIR BREAKING POINT WITH LOCAL GOVERNMENTS?



Photo: Patrick Mason

Rising Discontent: Are Citizens Reaching Their Breaking Point with Local Governments?

In recent times, an air of discontent has enveloped communities across various regions, fueled by tax hikes, increasing restrictions, and a perceived lack of responsiveness from local governments. As citizens grapple with growing frustration, a surge in civic engagement is becoming evident, with more people attending council meetings, participating in regional district discussions, and signing petitions. This heightened activism raises an important question: are citizens on the verge of pushing back against local authorities?

Traditionally, local governments have operated somewhat silently, executing decisions without significant public scrutiny. However, a paradigm shift seems to be occurring, as citizens demand greater transparency and accountability. Local groups such as COAP Inc. and Land Keepers are emerging, reflecting a collective sentiment that citizens' voices are going unheard, with local governments seemingly prioritizing provincial interests and internal staff over the concerns of taxpayers.

The PAN Disposal Controversy: A poignant illustration of this discontent is the recent case involving Patrick Mason and Reg Ogden. Their dissatisfaction stemmed from the decision of the Cowichan Valley Regional District (CVRD) to disregard a petition with 3000 signatures opposing the termination of PAN disposal, a well-regarded garbage pickup service. The CVRD opted for a mandatory homeowner fee for its replacement service, a move met with public outcry during a heated public meeting. Despite the vocal opposition, the concerns were dismissed, prompting citizens to take matters into their own hands.

Patrick Mason and Reg Ogden escalated their opposition by filing a civil claim with the Supreme Court of B.C. Rather than narrowly focusing on the PAN disposal issue, they broadened the scope with a 'Statement of Fact,' accusing the CVRD of "putting forward a bylaw without consulting the taxpayers of the Cowichan Valley." This strategic move opens the door for a comprehensive assessment of all decisions made by the CVRD, reflecting the widespread sentiment that citizens deserve a more inclusive decision-making process.

The legal action taken by Mason and Ogden sends a powerful message that transcends the specific PAN disposal issue. It serves as a rallying point for citizens who believe that local governments should be more attuned to the needs and opinions of their constituents. This case could set a precedent for communities nationwide, prompting a reevaluation of how local authorities interact with and involve citizens in decision-making processes.

As citizens increasingly vocalize their concerns and actively challenge decisions made by local governments, a critical juncture is reached. The PAN disposal controversy and subsequent legal action by Patrick Mason and Reg Ogden underscore a shifting dynamic in citizen-government relations. The question remains: will this wave of discontent spark a broader movement for more transparent, inclusive, and accountable local governance? Only time will reveal the lasting impact of these challenges to the status quo.

RETHINKING CLIMATE NARRATIVE: EXPERT DISSENT



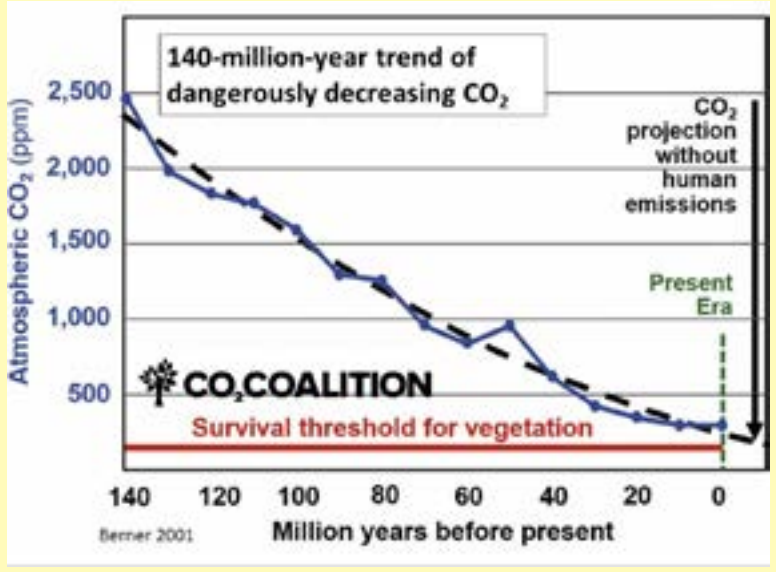
Have you ever heard the term "Trust The Experts"? This is where we find ourselves, listening to so-called experts that depend on grant money and acceptance into peer-reviewed papers as long as they go along with the narrative mostly based on the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (the IPCC). While there has always been scientists all over the world poking holes in the IPCC reports, we are seeing a vast number of award winning scientists coming forward to speak out against this 'climate disaster' narrative in the past few years, but why are their voices not amplified? Why are they not covered by Mainstream News?

I think many people can surmise as to why their voices are being ignored by the media and politicians alike. Imagine if these well renowned scientists were listened to, what would happen? It would be pretty safe to say that 90% of current bureaucracy and policy would grind to a halt, from 15 minute cities, to the carbon tax. Maybe it is time to inwardly reflect on this thought, or on why a gas so fundamental to life was chosen to be vilified?

Despite the prevailing pessimism and a tendency to overlook the fundamental principles learned in grade 8 science regarding life on Earth and its sustenance, there is a persistent tendency to vilify a gas crucial for life creation. This surprises numerous scientists globally. The CO2 Coalition's researchers have amassed a wealth of papers presenting alternative viewpoints from top scientists in various fields, often overlooked by mainstream news. But because ALL policy in North Cowichan and other areas must go through the climate lens, this topic must keep being spoken about.

Excerpt from co2coalition.org: "For the last 140 million years, CO2 levels fell precipitously & steadily to within about 30 ppm of the 150 ppm "line of death" below which plants can't survive. Both the relatively short-term data from ice cores and much longer-term data going back 140 million years (Berner 2001) show an alarming downward trend toward CO2 starvation. The release of carbon dioxide by the use of fossil fuels has allowed humanity to increase concentrations of this beneficial molecule, and perhaps avert an actual CO2-related climate apocalypse."

"CO2 is a particularly ridiculous choice for a 'pollutant.' Its primary role is as a fertilizer for plant life. Currently, almost all plants are starved of CO2. Moreover, if we were to remove a bit more than 60% of current CO2, the consequences would be dire: namely death by starvation for all animal life. It would not likely lead to a particularly cold world since such a reduction would only amount to a couple of percent change in the radiative budget. After all, a 30% reduction of solar radiation about 2.5 billion years ago did not lead to an Earth much colder than it is today, as we earlier noted in connection with the Early Faint Sun Paradox." -Richard Lindzen's paper: An Assessment of the Conventional Global Warming Narrative – Published by the Global Warming Policy Foundation – September 22, 2022





SOMEONE'S ALWAYS WATCHING...

IT'S US, WE'RE WATCHING.

February 2023 Budget debate Cllr. Findlay brought forward an idea for councillors to forego their cost of living raise of ($175 per month) to be a good example to the constituents, especially when they were discussing a 17% increase in municipal taxes. Debated and opposed by all but Cllr. Findlay, and Cllr. Manhas.

February 2023 a motion was brought forward by Cllr. Findlay to send a letter to the Province supporting the return to work of nurses who were not vaccinated. Opposed: Cllr. Justice, Cllr. Calijouw, Cllr. Toporowski, Cllr. Istace, Mayor Douglas.

May 2023 council decided to change the wording in policies from 'visible minority' to 'racialized', even though the one visible minority on the council spoke against this, and did not like the new wording. Opposed: Cllr. Findlay, Cllr. Manhas.

September 2023 council saw two delegations come forward to plead their tax exemption status that was denied to them based on slanderous and false information sent to the council by a few people in the community. Camp Qwanoes was denied their yearly tax exemption. After a very concise, and heartfelt presentation, they were able to restore their annual tax relief with Cllr. Istace opposed. The next delegation that had been denied tax exemption status was The House Of Grace Pregnancy Centre. The representative from House of Grace was very clear that they do not counsel against abortion, but are the only centre that offers post-abortion counseling. The House of Grace Pregnancy Centre was denied tax exemption. Opposed to the exemption: Cllr. Istace. Cllr. Justice, Cllr. Toporowski, Mayor Douglas (in-depth article can be found in our October edition or at: wwind.ca/tax-exemptions-held-hostage/)

November 2023 Council voted to remove Tek Manhas from the CVRD delegation (one of the few paid positions for the council) on the CVRD board because "they only have four seats" and do not want to dilute the votes on the board with anyone who may vote differently and not in tandem with the three others. It was stated by the mayor that a motion could be put forward next year to reinstate Cllr. Manhas, however, that would be a 4-3 vote again, and would most likely fail. Opposed: Cllr. Findlay, Manhas, and Caljouw

November 2023 Council put forward a motion to have taxpayers pay for any lawyer needed in a conflict of interest case brought forward against a Councillor. Opposed: Cllr. Findlay.

November 2023 when the 2024 Budget was being presented to the council, Cllr. Findlay asked for a 3% cap on Taxes this year as people continue to struggle - Did not become a motion.

November 2023 Council decided to accelerate Step Code 3 and 4, six years ahead of the Province (effectively a natural gas ban) after fierce opposition by the public who were told that the council would follow the Climate Action Plan, and if the public did not like it, they could vote in three years. Opposed: Cllr. Manhas, Cllr. Findlay, Cllr. Caljouw.

December 2023 council was challenged by many community members regarding the Climate Action and Energy Plan being #1 on the CAO's Budget page, over the actual Bylaw (OCP), and taking precedence over taxes and housing.

North Cowichan provides a leg-up toward Indigenous people, people who identify as a member of an equity-seeking group or a visible minority when appointing members to an advisory body. This is done through the council giving precedence to people within these groups.

Common themes: Construction is constantly being rejected based on the OCP, Climate Action Plan takes precedence over all other concerns (even though only 7% of residents stated climate as their priority).

SALUTING NORTH COWICHAN'S BOOTS-ON-THE-GROUND STAFF: UNSEEN HEROES OF OUR COMMUNITY

In every community, there are unsung heroes working tirelessly to ensure the well-being of residents. In North Cowichan, we are fortunate to have a group of dedicated individuals, the Boots-on-the-Ground staff, who consistently go above and beyond the call of duty. In our neighbourhood we have dealt with the parks, operations, and engineering staff often as we have had city pipes burst multiple times, sewer backups, and park needs.

The North Cowichan staff's ability to swiftly address emergencies is a standout quality. In the face of multiple pipe bursts, their prompt response not only prevented further damage but also showcased their genuine concern for our community's well-being. Their proactive approach and quick decision-making have undoubtedly saved homes and alleviated the stress of residents facing unforeseen challenges.

These workers have come at all hours, lent their hand and tools to homeowners whose houses were starting to flood, and spent hours all together speaking with residents. I can't say enough about these folks! They always follow up with requests/issues, and are extremely professional, and outright just nice people! These workers have shown care and concern for our/their community. Their willingness to engage with residents, listen to concerns, and offer solutions is appreciated. During a post-windstorm cleanup, they not only removed dangerous limbs but also took the time to chat with worried onlookers. Because of this personal touch they've formed a unique bond with our community.

My assumption, when I get great customer service from a happy worker, is that they must really like their job. If this is the case, kudos to North Cowichan for their employee relations! If only all large corporations could have this type of customer service from those that work directly with customers!

As we approach the festive season, it's only fitting to express our gratitude to the Boots-on-the-Ground North Cowichan staff for their invaluable contributions to our community. Their passion for their work, their professionalism, and their genuine care for residents is appreciated. To the unsung heroes of North Cowichan, we say thank you for being part of the backbone of our community. Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

By Adrienne





TAMMY'S TIPS!

Well, it is that time of year when the days seem dark, and the yearning for a cozy house settles in. We light our candles and plug in our twinkle lights, and for those who are lucky enough to have a fireplace, we enjoy the crackling ambiance a fire brings to the home.

Did you know the ash from your fireplace has so many usages? I certainly knew a few, but was recently shown a post where so many more ways to use this wood byproduct were listed!

Fireplace Glass Cleaner

Glass doors will quickly become dirty after frequent use. Wait for your unit to cool down, put some ash on a damp washcloth, and wipe the glass down, then voila! Your glass doors will look clear and beautiful again without causing damage to the gasket as chemical products do. This also works great for foggy headlights!

Clean Your Jewelry

Believe it or not, fireplace ash is not only a free silver cleaner, but it's also arguably the most effective. If you're cleaning jewelry specifically, lightly coat a clean cloth or rag with the ash, and then rub it around the silver. Powdery embers work as a cleaner for ALL items made of silver. For large silver items, mix one cup of ash and one cup of water to create a cleaning paste. Smear the paste on, and then let it sit for 3-5 minutes before cleaning it off.

Absorb Odours

Did you know that, just like baking soda, wood ash is a fantastic resource for absorbing home odours? Baking soda and wood ash both absorb moisture and odours because they are high in alkalinity. A cup or bowl of it in the back of the fridge or a small, smelly room will make things feel fresh again after a few days. So, save the baking soda for its intended purpose and switch to wood ash!

Use Ashes in Your Garden

The two main benefits of using firewood remnants in a garden are: boosting compost and amending soil. Wood embers contain valuable nutrients such as calcium and potassium. If lightly sprinkled on top of each layer, the fireplace ashes in the compost bin will eventually help supercharge the vegetables and plants. The natural potassium and calcium in the ash will help raise the soil's pH balance. The pH balance is important because it strongly affects overall plant growth. Spread it around the ground before planting anything new. *Plant and garden specialists suggest that you need to get a soil pH test before adding any to the soil!

Natural Ice Melt

By spreading firewood ashes along your stairs and walkways, not only will the ice melt off, but doesn't contain any pet-harming chemicals as other ice-melting products do.

NUT BAR: GREEN DREAMS, FISCAL SCHEMES, AND FOREST BEAMS

Welcome back to 'Nut Bar,' the only place where political antics are served with a side of satire and a garnish of wit.

In this month's episode, we're exploring the thrilling tightrope walk of fiscal responsibility and environmental enthusiasm. Grab your calculators and leaf blowers, folks – we're in for a bumpy ride!

Debtload Dilemma

Up in Ottawa, Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland is playing a high-stakes game of Jenga with the federal budget. The economic forecast? Cloudy with a chance of debt showers. While Freeland has her umbrella open for housing initiatives and eco-projects, there's a storm brewing over the sizeable debt load. It's like planning a beach vacation during a hurricane season – optimistic, but potentially soggy.

The Unemployment Upturn

Just when you thought it was safe to peek out from behind your economic shields, unemployment decides to jump in. With more folks potentially joining the jobless jamboree, it's like a surprise party that no one really wanted. Freeland, meanwhile, is doing the fiscal foxtrot, trying to keep the economy's feet moving to a slow but steady beat.

The Carbon Credit Conundrum

Back in our local territory, the municipality is flipping through its budget with a magnifying glass. Remember our beloved local forest, the one we stopped harvesting for timber? Turns out, those trees were more than just pretty scenery – they were our financial foliage! Dropping logging for carbon credits seemed like swapping a bicycle for a unicorn: magical in theory, but tricky in practice. Now, the reserve fund resembles a dried-up riverbed, and there's no carbon credit rainfall in sight.

The Taxation Tango

In a masterful move of hide-and-seek, our local leaders have tucked the cost of forest upkeep into 'general taxation.' It's like finding a raisin in your cookie when you expected chocolate chips – a surprise, but not the delightful kind. Taxpayers, prepare to dig a little deeper into those pockets because maintaining our green paradise just got a price tag.



Photo: WWIND file photo

Signing Off

In the grand circus of politics, our leaders are the trapeze artists, swinging between fiscal prudence and environmental dreams. As we, the audience, watch with bated breath, let's remember to applaud the daring attempts, even if the landing isn't always perfect.

So, as you navigate the forest of fiscal responsibility and dodge the raindrops of debt, keep your sense of humour dry and your spirits high. Here at the Nut Bar, we'll keep serving up the political punchlines, one nutty story at a time.

Until next time, stay savvy, stay smiling, and may your political compass be as steady as a well-balanced budget (or at least try not to spin out of control)!

By **Joseph**

ECHOES IN THE ECO-CHAMBER: A DAY IN THE LIFE OF PROGRESSIVIA

Greetings once more from Progressivia, the city where the future is so bright, you've got to wear your recycled-material shades.

It's 2050, and we've taken the progressive agenda, put it on a solar-powered rocket, and launched it into a world where 'green' is the only colour on the spectrum. Welcome to a city where diversity of thought has become as rare as a gasoline-powered car. In Progressivia, every idea is green, every policy is sustainable, and every conversation echoes with the sound of unanimous agreement. It's a harmonious hum, sure, but sometimes one can't help but miss the old days of debate and discourse.

In the realm of dining, meat is as mythical as a unicorn steak. Our weekly meat ration is now down to 0.8 meals - a number calculated by our beloved Dietary Overlords. Plant-based diets reign supreme, and the black market for a good old-fashioned burger is thriving – though, of course, we didn't tell you that.

Sustainability in housing has reached new heights – literally. Houses are now 70% transparent and made from recycled glass. Yes, everyone can see what everyone else is doing, and yes, it's as awkward as it sounds. On the bright side, nosey neighbours are a thing of the past – because they don't have to be nosey anymore!

The air might be cleaner, but the colour spectrum of ideas has faded. We're all aboard the green train, chugging along to a future where every step, every bite, and every thought leaves the smallest carbon footprint possible. So, as you sip your algae latte and nibble on your soy snack, remember: Progress isn't just a concept, it's a way of life. Just make sure your life fits within the eco-friendly guidelines, or you might just find yourself pedalling the community energy bike as penance.

Until our next dispatch from the future, keep your eco-ideals high and your carbon footprint low. After all, in Progressivia, you're never too far from a solar panel or a sustainability sermon. - Joseph





CONCERNS RISE AS MINISTRY OF FORESTS PLANS EXTENSIVE HERBICIDE SPRAYING IN REGIONAL DISTRICTS



Photo: www2.gov.bc.ca

In a recent press release, the Ministry of Forests announced a sweeping spraying campaign across all Regional districts, eliciting concerns over potential threats to water sources, wildlife, and human health.

However, the 30-day public input period appears inadequate, leaving many citizens uninformed about the risks associated with the proposed use of multiple chemicals.

The Cowichan Valley Regional District (CVRD), emphasizing local water source health, raises questions about the decision's transparency. The absence of key stakeholders, including the Green Party and a local MP advocating for toxin-free feminine hygiene products, adds to the unease. Their involvement is essential for a comprehensive assessment of environmental and health impacts.

This situation demands a more inclusive approach to decision-making. The Ministry must engage with the community on a larger scale, offering accessible information and a platform for meaningful citizen input. The current timeline does not align with the gravity of the decision; an extension of the public input period is essential. Our collective well-being and environmental health hinge on a transparent, inclusive, and deliberative process.

The person responsible for coordinating the management of invasive plants under this PMP on behalf of the Ministry of Forests, and the principal contact for information related to this plan is: Sheryl Wurtz – Invasive Plant Specialist, Ministry of Forests 441 Columbia Street Kamloops BC V2C 2T3, or contact your local MP, MLA, and Area Director today!

A letter from a concerned citizen: Ministry of Forests, Invasive.plants@gov.bc.ca

To Ministry of Forests, media, the men and women who live in British Columbia:

RE: Application number: FOR-SBC-PP-2024-2029. This application is addressed as an invasive species plan giving the illusion it is not decided yet what the plan is, and using deadly chemicals, toxins and poisons classed as herbicides to eradicate invasive species. It makes no sense and I don't understand why the government would utilize this arsenal of poisons in one breath then talk about climate change in the next. Also stated in the plan is cultural control.

What is cultural control?

Plants, trees and vegetation provide us with the air we breathe, the food we eat, the heat and medicine, among a few benefits and without them we no longer exist. Explorers, adventurers, nurseries and travellers have always brought in plants and seeds from other parts of the world. What is indicated as invasive are such plants that today are still being sold in nurseries or as seeds or travellers bring home to try. And polluting the earth with chemicals, toxins and poisons when some of the vegetation to be eradicated, the seeds have a lifespan of 10 years. These tiny seeds are in the ground, and the toxic poisons/chemicals will disperse into the waterways and ecosystem long before the seeds will no longer be viable. Putting tonnes of toxic chemical poisons into the environment, that all (Yes all) have a detrimental effect on human life, plant and animal life, water systems, bees, environmental, soil and air - is leading us to extinction. I strongly disagree with any plan to limit life on earth through use of toxic chemical poisons whether it is a herbicide, pesticide and/or other pharmaceuticals.

Time frame of application : April 15, 2024 – April 15 2029

Who: The purpose: – invasive plants on Provincial Public Land under jurisdiction of Ministry of Forests; Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure; Ministry of Water, Ministry of Land and Resource Stewardship,Ministry of Environment; Ministry of Climate Change Strategy

Where: Applies to: - Southern and Coastal B.C. and Northern Coast Haida Gwaii, Regional Districts of: Alberni – Clayoquot, Capital, Cariboo, Central Coast, Central, Kootenay, Central Okanagan, Columbia Shuswap, Comox Valley, Cowichan, Valley, East Kootenay, Fraser Valley, Kootenay Valley,, Metro Vancouver, Mount Waddington, Nanaimo, North Coast, North Okanagan, Okanagan Similkameen, Qathet, Squamish-Lillooet, Strathcona, Sunshine Coast, Thompson-Nicola

How: The methods include:Mechanical – cultural – biological control – and herbicides

Application of herbicides by:Wick/wipe-on, stem injection, ground vehicle mounted sprayers, backpack and/or handheld sprayers.

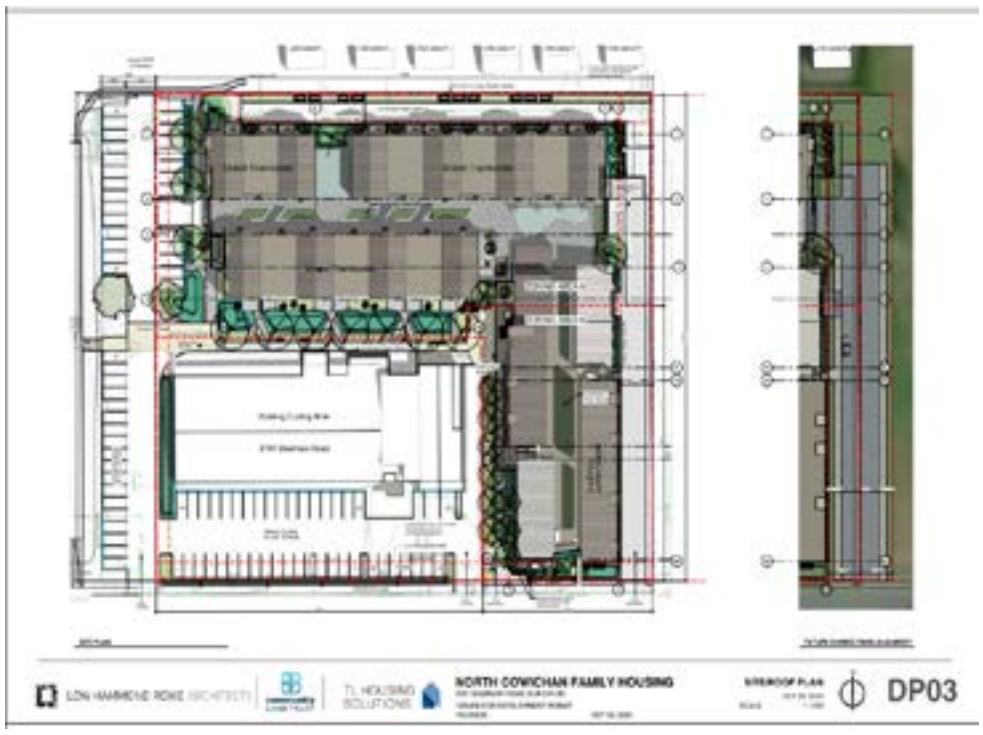
What: Herbicides to be used; Aminocyclopyrachlor – Truvist; Navius VM (Bayer)- (is a tree killing herbicide and as of May 16, 2019 has been restricted in Oregon.); Aminopyralid – Milestone, Restore II, Restore NXT, Clearview, Reclaim IIA (Dow Agrosciences) - (very toxic to aquatic life with long lasting effects, causes serious eye damage.); Clopyralid – Lontrel XC (Corteva)- (a hormone disruptor that has a similar mode of action to 2,4-D); Dicamba - Dyvel, Vanquish, Banvel- (see diflufenzopyr); Diflufenzopyr Overdrive (BASF/Bayer) - (contain allergen sulfites, eye irritant, skin sensitizer, poison, toxic to non-target terrestrial plants and aquatic organisms. Symptoms of overexposure to dicamba may include dizziness, muscle weakness, loss of appetite, vomiting, decreased heart rate, shortness of breath, incontinence, cyanosis, muscle spasms, exhaustion and loss of voice.); Fluroxypyr Starane, Pulsar- (harmful to aquatic life with long lasting effects.); Glyphosate - Roundup WeatherMax, Vantage Plus Max/VPMII, Vantage XRT; Roundup Transorb HC (Dow Agrosciences)- (associated with non-Hodgkin lymphoma (NHL), have an effect on the environment and be harmful to fish, crustaceans and amphibians as well asbeneficial bacteria in soil and water, harmful to bees.; 2,4-D – 2,4-D Amine 600, Reclaim II B, Restore B, Grazon XC (Dow Agrosciences)- (used in the Vietnam war as Agent Orange, cause coughing, burning, dizziness, temporary loss of muscle coordination, fatigue, muscle weakness,nausea, endocrine-disrupting chemical, impedes normal action of estrogen, androgen and thyroid hormone, decrease fertility, risk of birth defects.; Imazapyr – Arsenal, Arsenal-Powerline, Habitat- (causes serious eye irritation, harmful to aquatic life with long lasting effects.); Metsulfuron-methyl – Escort, Clearview, Reclaim A, Navius VM (Dupont)- (very toxic to aquatic life with long lasting effects, skin and eye irritation, poisonous if ingested or inhaled, may cause reproduction problems.); Picloram – Tordon 22K, Grazon XC, Tordon 101 (Dow Agrosciences) - (the same as 2,4-D above); Florpyrauxifen-benzyl – Rinskor, Milestone NXT, Restore NXT- (Similar and same effects as glyphosate); Triclopyr – Garlon RTU, Garlon XRT, Triclopyr 480- (causes skin and eye irritation)

Responses must be within 30 days of post. Posted Wednesday November 15, 2023

Would you trust the corporation that has the potential to make millions if not billions of dollars, to give you honest safety reporting? Other research done by concerned individuals and companies, using their own money is far and few between. Governments use our tax dollars to subsidise large corporations so in return politicians get .... Well, let's just say a lot of money is involved here.

Concerned B.C. resident

A $507,000 GHOST: DECADE-OLD REJECTED HOUSING PROJECT YIELDS NO PROGRESS



Mayor and Council, North Cowichan Municipality: This project requires a NEW PUBLIC MEETING / HEARING before any approvals!

A Public Meeting was held at Mount Prevost School back in Feb 2017 with NO residents supporting the project for 64 units and 98 parking spaces. After a 'NO GO' Public Meeting - The Municipality of North Cowichan staff then brought it back to Council only to have the Committee Of The Whole proposing the project be increased to 95 units, 102 pkg spaces - a 50% Increase! I was on Council at the time and was shocked by the disregard of the public wishes and input!

I had suggested to M.N.C. the Tansor Gravel Pit as a location for the housing when staff asked us Councillors for possible alternative sites. Many people at the public meeting said developing the gravel pit was the RIGHT Place for Affordable Housing to be built! Surprisingly, the previous C.A.O. (Chief Administration Officer for North Cowichan) brought forward an offer to purchase the Tansor Gravel Pit from a Victoria Developer, when the Property had not been for sale. This shocked Local Developers who would have been interested, having built Projects in the immediate area, and expressed their surprise and disappointment at this backhanded move by the Municipality.

The first week Ted Swabey arrived at North Cowichan as the new C.A.O., I drove him to the Curling Club on a Friday morning to meet with the manager and Pudge Bawa, a neighbour of the Club for over 40 years, who described how during the Club's late-night events they hold they become noisy and require parking, and it was unfathomable how the area could even be considered for an extremely large and dense housing development.

Myself, and the neighbourhood, feel this is the wrong location as a busy recreation area with curling club events, soccer events, and the Sikh Temple that all require parking. These events bring thousands of visitors to the Region, all needing somewhere to park, which would leave only Gilana Rd. to park on and which is as a residential neighbourhood. Thousands of units have, and are, still being built in the Berkey's Corner/ Sherman Rd/ Drinkwater/ Somenos area over the past 7-years. Just ask Rob Conway, Director of Planning.

North Cowichan Taxpayers should Not Be responsible for donating 'Free' land and pay $432,000. + $75,000. = $507,000. to cover costs to Develop a Project that will negatively impact the neighbourhood, limit recreational parking, and increase traffic with access along Sherman Rd, and the overfill for school pick up. What about the children, youth, and seniors who participate in and love to watch Curling and Soccer? Where will they park? Look at the site plan density - Where is the parking?! At what cost does the Council see this cram-jammed housing being stuffed in this space? This is a bad plan at every turn!

Concerned Citizen, Joyce Behnsen

BACKGROUND

3191 Sherman Road was acquired from the Duncan Curling Club in 2011 with the Club continuing to operate the curling facility through a lease agreement. In February 2017, Council rezoned a vacant portion of the property to a new CD15 zone, intending to develop it in partnership with the Community Land Trust (CLT) for an affordable housing project. A development permit was issued in March of 2021 for a 92-unit residential housing project and preliminary subdivision approval has been granted so a parcel for the housing project can be separated from the area leased by the Duncan Curling Club.

Construction of the affordable housing project has not proceeded to date, mainly because of challenges with qualifying for project funding through BC Housing. To help advance the project, members of Council and senior Municipal staff met with the Minister of Housing and senior representatives of BC Housing on February 3, 2022, to request funding concessions. At the June 15, 2022, Council meeting, Council committed to additional Municipal support for the project:

11.1 Municipal Contributions to Affordable Housing Projects

IT WAS MOVED AND SECONDED:
THAT Council:

1. Invite the Community Land Trust to submit a 2023 grant-in-aid application for up to $432,000 for the affordable housing project at 3191 Sherman Road.
2. Invite the Community Land Trust to submit a permissive tax exemption application for 3191 Sherman Road for an amount equivalent to half the annual property tax.
3. Commit $75,000 from the Affordable Housing Fund to the affordable housing project at 3191 Sherman Road.

(Opposed: Mahhas)
CARRIED





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,

Regarding the BC Government's "Development of a Pest Management Plan" in The Bulletin's Nov. 15 issue (p. A 15), to use 22 different herbicides, including glyphosate and 2-4 D for non-specified invasive species, while we are already exposed to thousands of unnatural toxins, would it not be worth it to limit treatment to long-delayed manual cuts, which create healthy jobs in fresh air? The duration of the program from 2024-2029 to eradicate these plants, some of which may actually be medicinal, indicates that the program is neither effective nor efficient.

I told a friend, diagnosed with prostate cancer, about this program and he bemoaned the early days he worked in forestry and was exposed to 2-4D as the going herbicide of choice. Cancer is rampant in our society, yet we keep proliferating the use of toxins, as if we can't see a connection. These chemicals enter our waterways, our air, and plant life, consumed by us and wildlife. We are not immune to the continued exposure of such an abundance of unnatural chemicals.

When the costs of medical treatment and disruption of lives for increasing cases of cancer, some more aggressive than ever, are taken into account, most of us would agree that elimination of unnatural chemicals is well worth any expense of non-chemical treatment of invasive plants.

It is difficult to believe that our society is so antiquated as to use outdated, harmful approaches to curb plant life. When it comes to our lives, saving money, profits, and the economy are not our first concern. I urge others to read the public notice and respond to the Ministry of Forests. If not us, then who will protect our environment?

Lavonne Garnett

Nanaimo, BC

Dear WWIND,

I attended the CVRD Town Hall at the Cobble Hill Farmers Institute that was held in the middle of harvest season and in the middle of the day, which was supposed to be a Town Hall to speak to farmers about the proposed agricultural plan formulated by UpLands consulting group (not local).

Despite the horrible timing of the presentation, the hall was filled and farmers eagerly awaited to learn about the new agricultural plan presented to locals from some off-island consulting group that our tax dollars had paid for. The entire presentation that was later presented to the CVRD as "public engagement" consisted of telling farmers and landowners how the ALC and the Ministry of agriculture work (which we all know as we have to struggle with permits from them all the time). This was followed up by a "this is who we are" presentation from UpLands consulting. After that waste of an hour, we were still waiting to hear the ACTUAL plan, but were asked if we wanted to go into 'breakout groups', a well known ploy to reduce crowd feedback. The crowd filled with farmers who had had their water cut off, or had issues with bringing soil on their lands and other complaints refused the 'break-out' group idea. Instead everyone gave true feedback as to their frustrations with the CVRD, ALC, and The Ministry of Agriculture.

On Dec. 6th the CVRD once again held a meeting during work hours (1:30) at their offices. Though farmers were invited, they were not allowed to speak. The Chair of the meeting was asked by an audience member to allow the elders and farmers the ability to speak but were told that the policies and procedures took precedence, and called a five minute recess (instead of letting the farmers speak). When the meeting began again the audience were told they could write in their concerns, or attend a public Town Hall (which they already had).The presentation by UpLands was a farce and did not address the anger and frustration of land owners they had witnessed in their previous Town Hall.

The CVRD seems more interested in staff presentations around climate change, and false reports from highly paid contractors than they do hearing from the backbone of their community. I feel this will not end well in the end when our voices are silenced continually.

I watched the COAP Town Hall on Youtube that actually covered the Agricultural Plan for our area. Broken down into bite size pieces.

R. Rogers CVRD constituent

Dear WWIND,

North Cowichan and the Cowichan School Board are offering to help find another location for the injection site on York Street.

But where were Rob Douglas, Mayor, and Cathy Schmidt, School Board Chair when 400 plus concerned parents, grandparents and citizens of the Cowichan Valley marched in protest trying to stop the Injection Site from setting up within blocks of 4 schools, the Sportsplex, the Library, and the Cowichan Community Centre?

As we walked past the now defunct Kim's Chinese Restaurant that operated for many years at the corner of York and Beverley Streets, poor Mr. Kim stood in the window of his restaurant, not daring to come out for fear of retaliation, but holding a sign on which the words "Thank You" were written for us to see. Meanwhile a group of people stood on the other side of the street and one of them was so stoned that she squatted down on the side of the road and shat in full view of all of us walking by. This was caught by the CTV cameraman and incorporated into their newscast on the protest march.

Mr. Kim wasn't the only grateful person. There was an elderly woman with a walker on the grounds of the first blue apartment block who walked beside the marchers whispering thank you as we went by.

There were a number of speakers that day, but the one that made a tremendous impression on me was a teenage student who said that she hoped to "never have to see men's genitalia again". This was before the Injection Site went in! You can imagine how much worse it became after the site opened! The only politicians we saw at that protest were Tek Manhas, of the North Cowichan Municipality and Randy Doman of the Cowichan School Board.

Duncan traditionally has had a small group of homeless people, but this number increased after the injection site opened with people coming from other areas greatly expanding our homeless numbers. Also, unfortunately, crime has increased dramatically since the injection site opened. Putting in an injection site has been a terrible experiment for our community.

We feel heartbroken for those with mental health and addiction issues. But putting an injection site into our community has proven that it doesn't help them. The Province must act to build rehabilitation facilities for those with mental health and addiction issues that are readily available and, if necessary, long-term. What is our Council and School Board thinking of to help find another injection site to harm some other area of our community?

I believe that a letter of apology is owed to those with the foresight to protest and try and stop the injection site.

Sincerely,

John & Carol Money

Dear WWIND,

I am writing to comment on the deliberate introduction of words slowly being infused into common use.

I attended a recent session regarding the Koksilah Watershed. The presenter, Tom Gleason introduced himself as a "Settler". After the evening presentation, I tried to speak to him but he had left the building. I was curious as to his intent when he used the term settler to describe himself.

I have read a great deal about how Canadians are being encouraged to see themselves, primarily by the Mainstream Media and through public events such as the one I recently attended. My reading has discovered a troubling movement afoot. By calling himself a settler, the audience is invited to think of ourselves as settlers too.

The next progression is already coming into language use. We are openly being referred to as thieves of the land we own and are also being determined to reside on stolen land. This portrayal of everyday Canadian citizens has the consequence of disconnecting us from our property and deeming us colonial settlers. The image of evil-doing early Canadians is being projected onto segments of the population and historical events all across the country.

Many Canadians are now becoming targets of hate and violence simply because of their skin colour and the history that they did not participate in. Will landowners be subjected to forceful removal such as occurred in the Scottish Highlands during the violent Highland Clearance?

I wish Mr. Gleason had made himself available for the many questions that participants had to ask him. He shared a skin color with many present and I wondered how he saw his future property ownership if indeed he is an owner. Perhaps he is simply a temporary settler with no right to own and occupy his land.

Ruth Waddell - Canadian Citizen and Property Owner

Reach out to your local Regional District Director today! Stop the spray of these toxic chemicals into our waterways and on our wildlife!

Contact: Ministry of forest invasive.plants@gov.bc.ca. Phone: 604-996-4683

B.C. Forest's invasive plant pest management plan "A pesticide use permit is an authorization to sell pesticides, apply pesticides to public or private land, to apply pesticides as a service, or for specified industrial uses on water" (there is a list of 23 Gov. approved chemicals for use in pest and invasive species in this notice). These permits will not only allow for traditional land based spraying but will also include spraying in bodies of water and adjacent areas including mudflats at low tide and beaches and marshes.

Below are some facts re. the proposed chemical to be used in this aquatic application. I believe a thorough search would prove 99% of the other chemicals in their "insect and weed control" arsenal would prove to be as (and much more-so) toxic, and more far-reaching than their intended target species. (Eg. Did you know that the "weed control" sprays used by forestry companies kill not only "weeds "but also arbutus, poplar, birch, willow, fireweed and many other species which are critical to many regional animal species?)

Trade name-"Habitat Aqua"-The active ingredient of this spray is Imazapyr. "Effects on fish:.... is "practically" non-toxic to fish, birds, mammals.*practically... means there IS toxicity present. Only "non toxic to fish birds mammals.." should be acceptable. Imazapic is a herbicide used to control "selected" annuals, perennial grasses, and broadleaf weeds". "Selected"...just because they will kill the targets, doesn't mean they will ONLY kill the one or two targeted species. Imazic shows moderate to high mobility in the environment, with a moderate potential to leach thru soils and contaminate groundwater also absorbed thru leaves and roots where it is transported to other parts of the plant. "Imazapic is "expected" to pose negligible risk to workers...". "Estimated" risk to fish and invertebrates is "estimated to be low..." The second ingredient (carrier) is Alcohol Ethoxylate which has created some concern in the European Union on toxicity to aquatic life

I fear that in our stampede towards 'Net Zero" something vital is being ignored...our environment and nature itself is being left in the dust (or in this case, a cloud of toxic spray). The fragility of our plants, animals and water systems are being ignored. There are 23 chemicals listed in this current application. These toxic mixes should not be sprayed in our forests, our backyards and our waterways. There is no known/proven long-term data on outcomes and impacts on our ecosystems regarding the consistent use of these chemicals..this is the test case, happening in real time. Consider DDT...this chemical was used for 30 yrs before its damaging effects were "officially" recognized. What is the purpose of striving for a Net Zero utopia if our vital flora and fauna isn't there to share it with us? Demand the BC Gov. rethink their approach to "pest management" and halt these ongoing applications. Please give this matter the serious attention it is deserving of and give them your feedback. If this application is approved these toxins will be ingested, absorbed, and inhaled by all ecosystems and inhabitants (uncontestable) until 2029, wherein another continuing application will be set forth.

Sincerely, Kate Macdonald

Petition for Canada to withdraw from the UN and its Subsidiaries

Conservative MP Leslyn Lewis has initiated a petition to be submitted to parliament for Canada to withdraw from the UN, its Agenda 21/2030 and its seventeen "Sustainability Goals."

Why is this necessary? Let's not forget that when PM Brian Mulroney committed us to Agenda 21 at the Rio "Earth Summit" in 1992, he gave away a significant part of our sovereignty and also committed 0.5% of our GDP to funding its goals.

We should keep in mind that what "Sustainable Development" means to the UN is not what we usually think about. For example if we cut down ten trees then we should plant ten more so we don't run out of wood. Reading between the lines, what it actually intends is turning away from capitalism and gradually adopting socialism where the UN and its agencies exert ever-greater control over our daily lives and standard of living.

This publication has already described some of the ways in which this centralized control is filtering down to the municipal level to change our lives for the worse. I strongly recommend signing MP Lewis' petition. It can be accessed at: **www.coap.ca/4623** The Petition has already received 57,435 signatures and is open for signature until the 7th February 2024 at 8:42 am EDT. It will need many more signatures to gain any significant attention from our Liberal government.

John Butterworth

HAVE WE ARRIVED AT PEAK SNITCH CULTURE—OR AT LEAST THE ATTEMPT TO ENGINEER IT?

Students at Ladysmith Secondary School on Vancouver Island, British Columbia, who wish to attend an upcoming school dance must first sign a Dance Code of Conduct contract and have their parent/guardian co-sign it.

The contract requires them (among many things) to report any "incidents that demean others or threaten the personal or emotional safety of individuals or groups." If any students fail to report their friends for the supremely vague offence of imperilling someone else's "emotional safety," those students who keep mum "could face discipline (that is restorative, preventative, and educative in nature)." Ummmm, Re-education Camp much?

Additionally, the full-page contract in fine print demands that all students who just want to hang with their friends at a school dance for an evening must commit to "Defending human rights according to the BC Human Rights Code" while enjoying themselves on the dance floor.

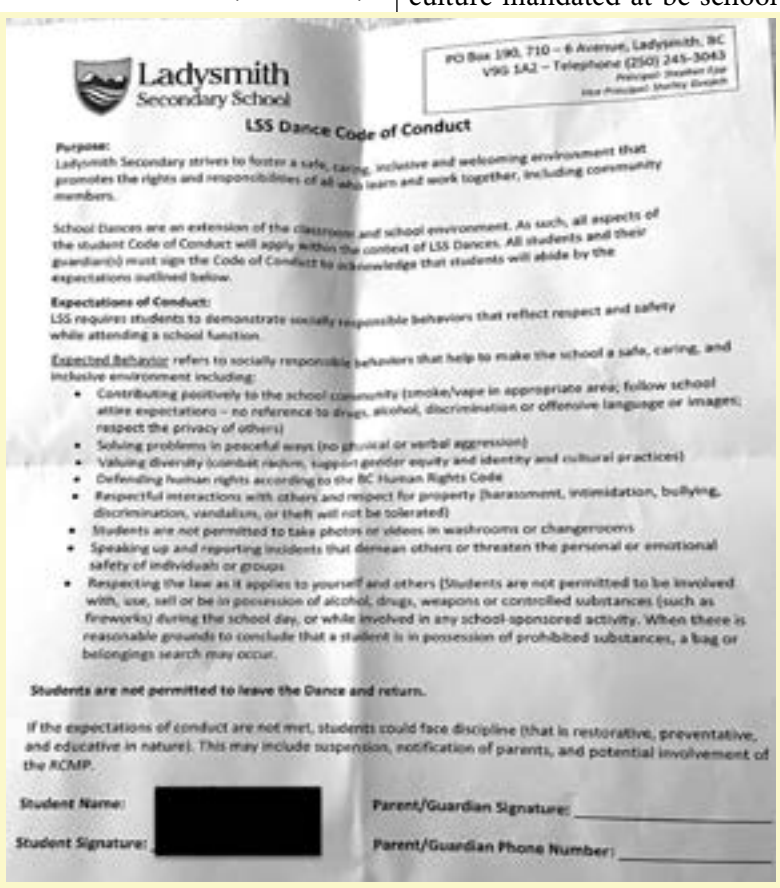
It should be noted that even adults in positions of authority don't understand or correctly apply the BC Human Rights Code. They turn to the courts to sort it out for them. Yet our teenagers at a school dance are required to have a nuanced understanding of this extensive legal document—and to actively defend it—or risk being sentenced to re-education camp.

While they shake their booty on the dance floor, Ladysmith students must multi-task and simultaneously "combat racism [and] support gender identity and equity and cultural practices."

When I shared this school dance contract on X today, respondents remarked: "This is Stasi level scary. What have we become?" "This reminds me of my own youth. In communist Czechoslovakia." "Such a Cultural Revolution tactic. #strugglesession So now we're at the sanctioned bullying phase?" "Sounds like a recipe for disaster. 'Emotional safety?' WTH? That could literally be anything." "They have to combat racism while dancing? What kind of students go here and why are they so racist that they have to fight it even while dancing?" And quite a bit more.

The authoritarian project requires a snitch culture to keep it afloat. And Ladysmith Secondary School is doing its best to groom the next generation of snitches with its "No snitchy, no dancy" contract for students.

Kim Goldberg
Substack : Kim Goldberg
kimgoldbergx1.substack.com/p/snitch-culture-mandated-at-bc-school



Ladysmith Secondary School

PO Box 190, 710 – 6 Avenue, Ladysmith, BC V9G 1A2 – Telephone (250) 245-3043

LSS Dance Code of Conduct

Purpose:
Ladysmith Secondary strives to foster a safe, caring, inclusive and welcoming environment that promotes the rights and responsibilities of all who learn and work together, including community members.

School Dances are an extension of the classroom and school environment. As such, all aspects of the student Code of Conduct will apply within the context of LSS Dances. All students and their guardian(s) must sign the Code of Conduct to acknowledge that students will abide by the expectations outlined below.

Expectations of Conduct:
LSS requires students to demonstrate socially responsible behaviors that reflect respect and safety while attending a school function.

Expected Behavior refers to socially responsible behaviors that help to make the school a safe, caring, and inclusive environment including:

- Contributing positively to the school community (smoke/vape in appropriate area; follow school attire expectations – no reference to drugs, alcohol, discrimination or offensive language or images; respect the privacy of others)
- Solving problems in peaceful ways (no physical or verbal aggression)
- Valuing diversity (combat racism, support gender equity and identity and cultural practices)
- Defending human rights according to the BC Human Rights Code
- Respectful interactions with others and respect for property (harassment, intimidation, bullying, discrimination, vandalism, or theft will not be tolerated)
- Students are not permitted to take photos or videos in washrooms or changerooms
- Speaking up and reporting incidents that demean others or threaten the personal or emotional safety of individuals or groups
- Respecting the law as it applies to yourself and others (Students are not permitted to be involved with, use, sell or be in possession of alcohol, drugs, weapons or controlled substances (such as fireworks) during the school day, or while involved in any school-sponsored activity. When there is reasonable grounds to conclude that a student is in possession of prohibited substances, a bag or belongings search may occur.

Students are not permitted to leave the Dance and return.

If the expectations of conduct are not met, students could face discipline (that is restorative, preventative, and educative in nature). This may include suspension, notification of parents, and potential involvement of the RCMP.

Student Name: [redacted]

Student Signature: [redacted]

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____

Parent/Guardian Phone Number: _____

UNCOVERING THE HIDDEN IMPACT OF CELL TOWERS ON ISLAND ECOSYSTEMS

With so many folks fighting the erection of cell towers up and down the island, Westward Independent thought we would reach out to an independent expert who resides on the east coast to share some of her thoughts and findings on how the towers have been shown to affect wildlife. Here is her article below:

In our rapidly advancing technological age, the world around us is undergoing profound changes, not all of which are positive. One such concern is the alarming decline of insects, essential pollinators vital for maintaining ecosystems and supporting agriculture. While conventional factors like pesticides and intensive farming practices are often blamed, a less acknowledged contributor to this decline is the expanding network of cell towers emitting electromagnetic fields (EMF).

A recent study published in the "Reviews on Environmental Health" summarizes the results of studies investigating the toxicity of electromagnetic fields in insects. The findings are disconcerting, revealing DNA damage, fertility issues, altered behavior, and disruptions in various physiological processes. The clear evidence from laboratory studies raises a red flag about the broader ecological consequences of non-thermal EMF on insects, mirroring the global decline in insect populations.

Mark Broomhall, a naturalist and ethno-botanist in New South Wales, Australia, witnessed a significant decline in insects, birds, and wildlife over a 15-year period. Initially attributing this decline to global warming, he later connected it to the expansion of radio signals from a nearby cell tower communication complex on Mount Nardi. The Night Cap National Park, home to ancient Gondwana rainforests, experienced a drastic loss of species with the introduction of new communication technologies, from analogue to digital signals and mobile phone technologies.

Broomhall documented a 70 to 90% decline or disappearance of wildlife in the Nightcap National Park between 2000 and 2015, within a 2 to 3 km radius of the Mount Nardi Tower Complex. His report, sent to UNESCO and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), highlighted the correlation between technological advancements and the decline of biodiversity in the area.

Despite Broomhall's impassioned plea for attention to the ecological consequences, the Mount Nardi tower complex became essential for emergency communications during the 2019 bushfires. Bai Communications, the operator of the complex, collaborated with the rural fire service to keep the tower running, even dropping fire retardant from helicopters to protect the communication infrastructure.

The safety of human lives during emergencies took precedence over the observed detrimental effects on wildlife and ecosystems. The complex became a lifeline during bushfires and floods, solidifying its status as a crucial communication hub. The urgency of maintaining communication infrastructure in the face of natural disasters overshadowed the concerns raised by Broomhall and other environmentalists.

This case prompts critical questions about how we define safety. While emergency communication networks are undoubtedly crucial for human safety, the potential harm inflicted on ecosystems and wildlife by increasing radiation density remains largely unexplored. Studies in Germany have shown the damaging effects of radio communication technology on trees, emphasizing the need for a comprehensive understanding of the environmental impact of our technological progress.

As we embrace constant connectivity, it becomes imperative to consider the consequences on nature. Can we strike a balance between technological advancements and the preservation of biodiversity? Initiating collaborations between engineers developing bio-compatible communication technology and biologists knowledgeable about EMF effects on animals might pave the way for sustainable solutions.

The safety dilemma extends beyond human lives to encompass the delicate ecosystems supporting all life on Earth. A thoughtful approach to technological expansion that considers the well-being of both humans and the natural world is essential for a sustainable and harmonious future. The interconnectedness of human well-being and environmental health necessitates a holistic approach to innovation, envisioning a future where communication technology coexists harmoniously with nature, rather than at its expense.

Margreet Van Den Berg

HEALING HERBS FOR WINTER AND THEIR TRADITIONS



Photo: WWIND file photo





The use of particular herbs and their herbal holiday traditions dates back thousands of years to ancient Greek and Roman times, the Egyptians and beyond. Ancient peoples honoured the seasons and marked their shifts with rituals. Their lives were intimately tied to the land and there was a sacredness and deep meaning to be found in celebrating the changing seasons.

There are so many favourite herbs used today around the holidays in everything from fancy lattes, confections, and perfumes to shampoos that it's easy to lose sight of the ancient origins of the use of these plant medicines. You'll notice that the main thing these "winter" favourites have in common is that they are all very fragrant.

Aromatic herbs have commonalities such as most contain volatile oils that help purify the air, stimulate the senses, and have carminative (expels gas, relieves flatulence) and antimicrobial properties. Let's briefly explore some popular wintertime and holiday herbs still used today:

Frankincense: It cannot be ignored that Frankincense is considered so sacred it was gifted to baby Jesus. Frankincense has long been considered a deeply spiritual and healing herb, often burned during ceremonies for connection with the divine, protection and healing. Its uses medicinally include being extremely anti-inflammatory which is why it is also used commonly in cosmetics as well.

Evergreens (Fir, spruce, cedar etc.) Of course, the tradition of bringing in a Christmas tree or decorating the home with evergreen boughs is incredibly ancient. Today's research shows that the volatile oils within evergreen trees are proven antimicrobial agents, help open breathing airways and prevent colds, so our ancestors were onto something vital that they didn't need laboratories to confirm because they intuitively already knew it was a wise idea. Pine, fir, and Juniper trees are also commonly used internally as a rich source of vitamin C, in cough syrups and other remedies because of their medicinal properties.

Ginger: The use of ginger goes back centuries but its popularity as a holiday treat in the form of gingerbread has been around since the 11th century, and even before that in Asia. It was so beloved as a food and medicine for tummy troubles, even Shakespeare mentioned it.

Mulling spices: Allspice, cinnamon, star anise, orange zest and clove. Mulled wine and juice has been a popular winter beverage and is an essential holiday tradition for many countries. For centuries mulled wine was taken as a health tonic and to take the edge off of the cold temperatures. It's no wonder as these herbs do have a warming action and help increase circulation.

Peppermint: There is not a lot of historical evidence to confirm or deny the suggestion that the candy cane was invented sometime around 1670, apparently by a local choirmaster in Cologne, Germany who was looking for a way to keep rowdy young people quiet at Mass. It is said he asked a local confectioner to create a special hard candy for the kids to keep busy for a while. It was shaped like a Shepherd's staff. This may be pure folklore but the peppermint candy cane has certainly become an iconic holiday treat even if it's origins aren't clear. What is known is that peppermint is an excellent diaphoretic herb to use for fevers, it is calming to the nervous system as well as the digestive system and makes an excellent inhalant for nasal catarrh. Candy canes are not the optimal delivery method if you're wanting to maximize health benefits of this herb, but as a mom of 3, I can certainly confirm their ability to keep children quietly amused!

This year as you mark the holidays with your favourite traditions, I hope you'll reflect with appreciation the many ways that herbal medicines influence and enhance our holidays and our health throughout these winter months.

Andrea Larsen

Read more from Andrea or sign up for her classes at **www.andrealarsenrncp.com**



Photo: WWIND file photo

WARREN CHASE

Warren's Market Update

November didn't hold any surprises, as we get close to Christmas the market usually slows down considerably. There is undoubtedly demand out there, but high interest rates are deterring many buyers from moving forward. Many potential buyers seem to be opting to wait until spring, with the hope that rates will come down. The BCREA anticipates that Vancouver Island Real Estate Board will close the year with around 7,100 sales, the lowest number posted since 2013



Merry Christmas
To everyone in the
Cowichan Valley

RE/MAX
ISLAND PROPERTIES

COWICHAN VALLEY MARKET STATISTICS - NOVEMBER 2023

SINGLE FAMILY DETACHED

AVERAGE SALE PRICE

NOVEMBER 2022: $726,264
NOVEMBER 2023: $788,506 ↑

NUMBER OF SALES

NOVEMBER 2022: 46
NOVEMBER 2023: 42 ↓

DAYS ON THE MARKET

NOVEMBER 2022: 54
NOVEMBER 2023: 48 ↓

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

RE/MAX

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
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