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ISSUE 10



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OVERDOSE CRISIS SKYROCKETS 400% IS SAFER SUPPLY FALLING SHORT?

COWICHAN VALLEY PARAMEDICS FACE OVERDOSE EMERGENCIES DAILY

Cowichan's opioid crisis, has roots deeply entrenched in the fabric of communities across the nation.

This has prompted a variety of responses aimed at stemming the tide of overdoses and deaths. Among these initiatives, the "safer supply" program stands out as a government-endorsed strategy designed to mitigate the devastating impact of the crisis. Introduced as a compassionate, harm-reduction approach, the program provides drug users with pharmaceutical alternatives to illicit street drugs, aiming to curb the deadly consequences of substances like fentanyl. The rationale behind safer supply is straightforward: by offering regulated, less harmful options, the program seeks to save lives that might otherwise be lost to overdose.

However, an in-depth examination of the safer supply initiative reveals a complex reality fraught with unintended consequences. Despite its noble intentions, the program has been criticized for inadvertently exacerbating the very crisis it aims to combat. In British Columbia, for example, the escalation of the situation is starkly illustrated by the alarming increase in emergency calls related to overdoses. In the community of Duncan, the number of such calls to ambulance services has skyrocketed, from 162 in 2016 to an astounding 819 by 2023—an increase of over 400%. This dramatic rise in overdose-related emergencies underscores the severity of the opioid epidemic and the challenges faced in addressing it effectively.



Paramedics attend suspected overdose, York Rd, Duncan - WWIND File Photo

The safer supply program, while providing temporary relief for some, has also led to significant issues. A notable portion of the pharmaceutical drugs distributed through the program are being diverted to the black market, where they are sold or traded, often for more potent substances like fentanyl. This diversion not only undermines the goals of safer supply but also contributes to a cycle of addiction that is increasingly difficult to break. Moreover, the availability of potent opioids through the program has attracted a new demographic of users, including young people who, drawn by the drugs' accessibility and perceived safety, are at significant risk of developing opioid addictions.

Critics argue that the liberal government's approach, centred on the provision of alternative drugs, fails to address the root causes of addiction and overlooks the need for comprehensive support services. The comparison to the OxyContin scandal of the 1990s and 2000s is inevitable, with many fearing that history is repeating itself. During the OxyContin crisis, the over-prescription of potent opioids, driven by misleading information and aggressive marketing, led to widespread abuse, addiction, and death. Today, the safer supply program, despite its different context and objectives, is seen by some as a similarly flawed strategy that risks contributing to the perpetuation of the opioid crisis rather than resolving it.

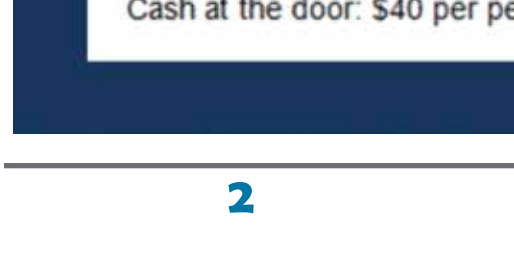
Against this backdrop of increasing emergency calls and the complex challenges of the safer supply program, the story of individuals like Wendy, living on the front lines of the crisis, offers a poignant insight into the daily realities of those it aims to help. Her experience, navigating the pitfalls of the safer supply system and the broader opioid epidemic, embodies the human cost of a crisis that continues to defy simple solutions. As the debate over the effectiveness of safer supply and the search for more holistic approaches to addiction treatment continue, the escalating emergency call volumes in communities like Duncan serve as a sombre reminder of the urgent need for action. - **Staff**

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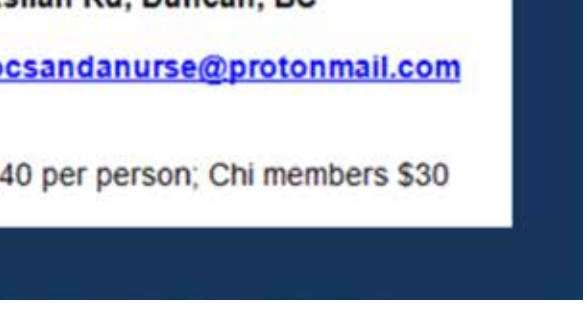
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LIFE ON WHEELS

As we persist in highlighting extraordinary individuals in our community who take matters into their own hands when governments fail, we turn our attention once again to Cheryl and her remarkable volunteers from Life On Wheels, applauding their ongoing evolution.

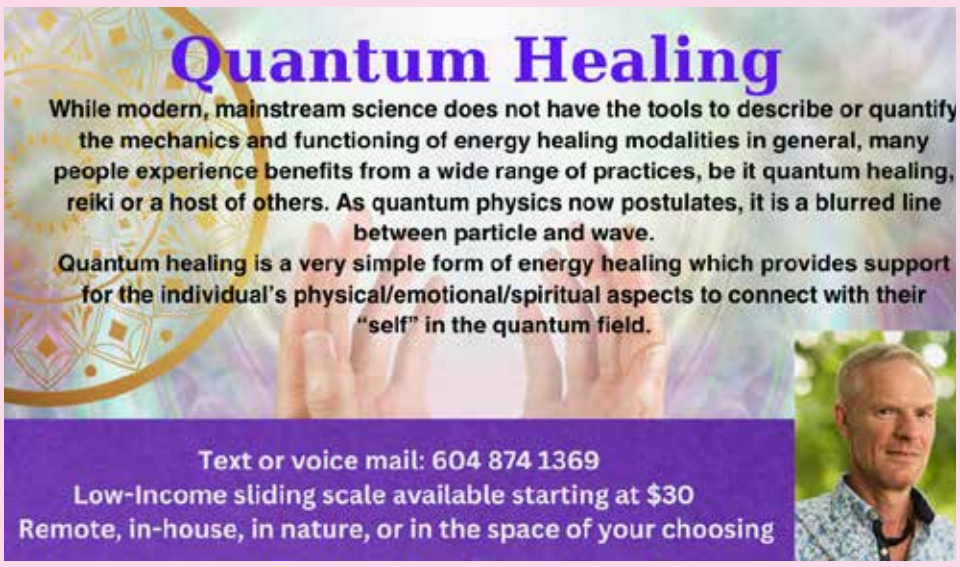
Life on Wheels (L.O.W.) originated as a small outreach initiative, providing a foundation where the homeless and addicts could rely on a hot drink and a place to sit and chat. The primary objective was to encourage guests to eventually seek the detox services offered by L.O.W. Cheryl and her team secured a few trailers, successfully administering detox services to members of the community. Subsequently, volunteers facilitated their transportation to the mainland for rehabilitation. Since then, L.O.W. acquired a 27-foot-long donated Winnebago, serving as a mobile warming shelter during cold nights, capable of accommodating 12 people. This initiative aims to provide warmth and protection to those in need.

Additionally, L.O.W. began renting a house where the team undertakes the intensive rehabilitation of women, incorporating vitamin regimens, therapy, and outdoor fitness. The women live together, sharing household chores as a cohesive team, and to date, the home boasts a 100% success rate. Unfortunately, due to unforeseen circumstances, the L.O.W. team must relocate from their current residence and is actively searching for another space to continue their impactful work. The trailers are now designated for male detox and are managed by male volunteers who have successfully recovered and wish to contribute back to the community.

As Life On Wheels continues to expand, they are in urgent need of more volunteers and financial support to sustain and enhance their operations, emphasizing their commitment to not accept any government funding. Those interested in contributing or volunteering can reach out to Cheryl at 250-706-2428.

- Staff





DRINKWATER ROAD DEVELOPMENT BLUNDER

A builder purchased land between Ford Rd. and Paddle Rd. in 2020 and embarked on the lengthy journey toward approval. The developer initially presented a plan for a 5-story, 108-unit building with some affordable housing. Subsequently, the Municipality of North Cowichan (MNC) requested a "Park" dedication, involving the removal of the northern half of the subject property and road dedication. Opting not to take on the role of a park ranger, the owner has offered to sell the "Park" dedication land to the MNC at fair market value for $1,415,000.00 (your tax dollars).

This change, however, compelled the developer to undergo a complete revision to the design. It was determined that the end result would be a single 6-storey residential building with only 55 dwelling units. After 3-1/2 years since the builder's initial Zoning Amendment meeting with the MNC and over 5 months since their revised Zoning Amendment application was submitted (July 2023), the MNC introduced the "Drinkwater Road Frontage Improvements" to locate a new bus stop at the southwest corner of the subject site. This new statutory right of way imposed another reduction of the subject site. Additionally, the MNC recently increased the east-west bisecting road dedication from 17.7M to 20.0M, resulting in an additional (40+/- SM) to be cut from his property. Finally, there were also two road corner cut dedications at both the northeast corner and southeast corner.

The developer's architect is quoted as saying when asked by the MNC about affordable housing: "Regarding 'affordable housing policy' – in consideration of the significant reduction in the development potential of the site after the dedications combined with the economic impacts and reduction in the total number of dwelling units, unfortunately, there remains no potential to integrate any 'affordable housing' units at this time."

Regarding "community amenity contributions" – according to our records, the Owner/Developer promised to donate, in lieu of community amenity contributions and as a condition to the sale of the "Park" land to the MNC, upon the issuance of the Building Permit, the total amount of $3,000/ unit with the stipulation that the total amount donated would be allocated to the Municipal Park Reserve Fund and not simply allocated to a general reserve fund.

In the end, it seems as if N.C. will be paying 1.5 million for parkland they will have to maintain, located steps from the wet housing complex, while still receiving $165k in "community amenity fees" for a building now without affordable housing units.

- Staff

LAND ACT UPDATES

As a follow-up to the article in addition 9 on the amendments to the land act, the government has now paused or decided to not follow through, with these amendments that would put DRIPA into a more legal position. From the BC government's website: "The BC Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (DRIPA) Action Plan was released on March 30, 2022, and provincially guides the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples."

The B.C. government was quietly slipping the amendments that gave 'Indigenous' equal say over crown land usage (which covers 95% of all BC land). But when the story gained mainstream momentum and exposure, and the spotlight shone hotly on the BC NDP, it seemed that they had to 'reconsider' their rush. As expected, representatives who shared their worries over these amendments, were called racist, and those who sought legal clarification that the 'Indigenous' would have veto power over land use were called 'spreaders of misinformation". Expect this to only be the beginning of this story as the Provincial government still has this statement on the website: "The DRIPA Action Plan for the long-term vision to achieve the objectives of the UN Declaration over time."

The full Land Amendment Act article can be viewed in edition 9 at wwind.ca.

- Staff

DOCTORS MEET WITH CAMPBELL RIVER COUNCIL

On Feb 29th 2024 Dr. Anna Kindy and Dr. Ingrid Pincott ND (Retired Naturopathic Physician) presented a delegation to the local Campbell River City Council.

The City Council is comprised of Councillors Ron Kerr, Susan Sinnott, Sean Smythe, Doug Chapman, Tanille Johnston, Ben Lanyon and Mayor Kermit Dahl. The goal of the delegation was to bring to the attention of City Council the impact on health care that the Health Professions and Occupations Act (HPOA previously Bill 36), is having on the community of Campbell River as well as all of British Columbia.

The HPOA Act was passed on Nov 24th 2022 by the current BC Government with little consultation, and it impacts all BC Health Care Professions. Bill 36 was passed with little debate in spite of being one of the largest Bills ever passed in the legislature. The HPOA ACT amalgamates 15 Health Professional colleges into 6 and gives unprecedented power to the Minister of Health. All positions on the College boards will be appointed by the Minister, previously 50% were elected and 50% were appointed. Future regulations are made behind closed doors with no input from stakeholders.

The Health Minister can dismiss and reappoint Board Members and can override Public Health Measures. The Bill allows adoption as law regulations from unelected and unaccountable foreign international bodies. In the Act there is no definition of what constitutes 'misinformation'. The Health Minister defines misinformation, at his ongoing discretion, that may lead to fines of $25,000 or 6 months in jail, all of which can potentially result in loss of informed consent and bodily autonomy. Our health care is in crisis and the HPOA does not address fundamental issues related to this crisis. Under our present system of centralized Health Authority, a culture of fear already exists. The HPOA Act will not only muzzle health care workers but increase this culture of fear which will increase health care worker burnout and exit from B.C.

In summary, the HPOA ACT will make patients less safe. This ACT is control over safety and healthcare should not be politicized.

www.cssem.org/HPOA provides more information.

On November 9 th 2023, a team of 56 Health Professionals from across BC presented to John Rustad, the leader of the BC Conservative Party, and Bruce Banman over 5000 signed HPOA cards asking the government to repeal the ACT. After attending the Question and Answer period in the Legislature there was a press release on the back steps of the Legislature. The event was barely covered by local media. Dr. Pincott attempted to get a Press Release of this event was published in the Campbell River Mirror and denied three times.

The delegation was well received by the Council. The council expressed an interest in approaching other City Councils across the province through the UBCM to consider putting pressure on the BC Government.

The YouTube documentary by Aaron Gunn, "Fleeing Canada to Save Their Lives" filmed in Campbell River, was recommended as an example of the state of health care in our city.

The citizens of British Columbia have a right to know about this HPOA Act and its impact, along with other Bills such as Bills 31, 44 and 47. The council was asked if they could provide a venue free of charge for local citizens to have town halls to discuss these and other Acts that are being passed with lightning speed in the BC legislature.

www.bctownhalls2024.ca

In conclusion, the Council was invited to attend and participate in the upcoming Townhall in Campbell River on March 26th at the Maritime Heritage Center from 7-10 pm. Council Members expressed their desire to follow up with the presenters and provide some solutions.

https://youtu.be/a-qs3egWgIA

Link to the 35-minute delegation proceedings from www.campbellriver.ca



THE NDP'S PROVINCIAL DEBT AND A COMMON-SENSE PLAN TO FIX IT

In 2023, the NDP government in BC achieved a new record for the highest provincial budget deficit in history. The money spent in 2023 was even greater than in 2021 through the Covid pandemic.

The greatest source of government spending is public-sector employees. Right next to it is the interest on existing debt.

According to auditor-general Michael Pickup, BC has failed to meet Canadian accounting standards for the last 16 years.

The negative effects of this debt increase will be felt immediately as increased interest costs. In 2022/23, the NDP government spent $2.7 billion on debt interest. With the government's projected 2024 deficit, taxpayers will now spend $4.1 billion on interest costs this year.

The net debt will increase from $10,288 per person in 2016/17 to a projected $21,040 per person in 2026/27. This makes life unaffordable in BC and people are leaving.

According to the Fraser Institute Report, "B.C.'s large deficits and rapid debt growth are the result of rapid spending increases in recent years. In fact, if the Horgan and Eby governments had not increased the rates of spending during their time in office, the provincial debt burden would be declining…rather than rising".

However, despite the already dire economic situation, the NDP Government shows no intention to curb spending. The examples are plentiful. Between 2020 and 2023, NDP MLA Spenser Chandra Herbert alone spent $70,000 on helicopter trips between his home and his riding, even when the government was not in session. BC United MLA Michael Lee spent almost $90,000 in 3 years on travel. Both of them were commuting between Vancouver Island and Vancouver, where much less expensive options, such as the BC Ferry service, are readily available.

Another egregious example of the NDP Government's spending is its commitment to the failed policy of "safer" supply. In November of 2023, 4265 people were prescribed opioids under the 184-million-dollar program. This funding could be better spent on creating more treatment beds and prevention programs, saving lives and keeping children from being exposed to drugs.

It may sound surprising to many, but residents of our community indirectly pay to feed the elk. When elk destroy the hay crops, farmers are compensated to replace the hay they need for their livestock. The common-sense solution would be fencing the fields and paying for it once, rather than reimbursing farmers every year and worsening hay shortages and shipping the hay from the mainland, creating more emissions, and ending up in higher food prices.

Another example of reckless spending, which is relevant to our community is NDP's allocation of $1.5 million to flood the prime farmland in Cowichan Bay estuary. This is not even talking about the serious environmental concerns, threatening the food supply and risk of salt water intrusion into our drinking water supply. This project has been spearheaded by the NGO Nature Trust. The Minister of Agriculture Pam Alexis, when questioned by BC Conservatives Leader John Rustad, had no recollection of signing off on spending this money.

Reversing this downward spiral is possible and the BC Conservatives are determined to do just that. We are clear on our priorities to reduce spending and balance the budget.

The plain and simple common sense would suggest that the budget surplus should be directed to pay the debt and reduce taxes, which could then go back into the economy.

All existing programs should undergo a mandatory test of necessity before the continuation of their funding.

BC Conservatives support fair competition for government contracts based on free market principles.

Digging the province out of the NDP-created financial abyss will not be easy but it is possible if we have the political will and the courage to face reality.

We must break this vicious cycle of spending and borrowing and learn how to live within our means. We all know how to do it. It is time to elect a Government that knows as well.

THE LIBERAL GOVERNMENT'S TIGHTENING GRIP ON DIGITAL CANADA: A PRELUDE TO DYSTOPIA?

In the shadow of well-intentioned endeavors to secure the digital realm for the young and vulnerable, the Canadian federal government's recent legislative ventures hint at a future that uncomfortably mirrors the dystopian surveillance state of George Orwell's 1984.

The introduction of Bill S-210 and the Online Harms Act, Bill C-63, by the Liberal administration underscores a growing trend of overreach and control that extends its tendrils deep into the fabric of digital freedom and privacy, raising questions about the cost of security at the expense of fundamental rights.

Bill S-210, aptly dubbed the "Most dangerous Canadian Internet bill you've never heard of" by OpenMedia, stands as a testament to this overreaching trend. The bill's noble intention to shield minors from sexually explicit materials online veils the looming threat it poses to the open internet as we know it. By potentially mandating Canadians to provide government-issued ID or undergo facial recognition scans to access a broad swath of the internet, the bill risks establishing a surveillance infrastructure ripe for abuse. The very notion of creating "thousands of government-mandated leaky adult activity databases" across the country, as OpenMedia puts it, heralds an era where private lives are no longer private, subject to the whims of hackers and government scrutiny alike.



Photo: WWIND File Photo

This legislative effort, coupled with the ambitious Online Harms Act, paints a stark picture of a government emboldened to dictate terms to the digital domain. While the Act's goals to combat online harms are commendable, the draconian measures it proposes—life imprisonment for hate speech offences and sweeping powers for a Digital Safety Commissioner—suggest a willingness to sacrifice liberty for an illusory sense of safety. The Act's broad definitions of harm and aggressive regulatory stance threaten to transform the internet from a space of free expression into a sanitized, heavily monitored echo chamber, overseen by an omnipotent digital overseer.

Moreover, the implications of such legislative actions extend far beyond the curtailing of digital freedoms. They hint at a fundamental shift in the relationship between the state and its citizens, from one of mutual trust to one of suspicion and control. By mandating invasive age verification techniques and imposing stringent content regulations, the government is signaling its readiness to prioritize control over privacy, oversight over autonomy, and regulation over innovation.

One must ponder, in this rush to protect, whether we're inadvertently paving the way for a society in which the government's gaze penetrates every digital interaction, where every click and scroll is subject to scrutiny. The Orwellian undertones of these legislative efforts are unmistakable, inviting comparisons to a world where Big Brother is always watching, always listening. The satire of life imprisonment for hate speech may well become a chilling reality, prompting us to question whether the path we tread leads to safety or to a surveillance state under the guise of protection.

As Canadians, we find ourselves at a crossroads, facing a future where our digital lives are no longer our own, but a commodity to be regulated and monitored. The Liberal government's legislative agenda, though cloaked in the intention of protecting the vulnerable, raises alarm bells for those who value privacy, freedom, and the open internet. In this digital age, the battle for these fundamental rights is not just about opposing a bill or an act; it's about resisting the creeping tendrils of control and surveillance that threaten to encroach upon our most private moments. It's about ensuring that the pursuit of security does not become a pretext for the erosion of the freedoms upon which our society is built.

It is incumbent upon us to demand more than just good intentions from our lawmakers. We must call for legislation that upholds our rights to privacy, freedom of expression, and an open internet. The alternative is a future where our digital lives are not our own, but rather, the domain of a government all too willing to dictate the terms of our digital existence. In this fight for digital freedom, complacency is not an option. For in the words of Orwell himself, "Freedom is the freedom to say that two plus two make four. If that is granted, all else follows."

- J. Enslow





THE CONTINUING SAGA OF THE COWICHAN BAY ESTUARY

As we continue our coverage of the Cowichan Bay Estuary narrative that unfolded in June 2023, new details are emerging.

The public was abruptly notified about the intention to remove dykes, a decision that would flood 70 hectares, including Dinsdale Farm. This action is expected to result in the flooding of productive farmland. There is also a risk of possible contamination of a reserve well with saltwater. Additionally, the removal of the dykes would establish a flood path for the river, potentially impacting reserve lands and properties adjacent to the farm.

Upon learning that Nature Trust and Ducks Unlimited planned to receive 3 million for flooding the bay, utilizing sketchy climate models and informal agreements with local First Nations, rather than investing $6-9 million in dyke repairs, controlled panic ensued. In response, a concerned neighbour established a society called Land Keepers, engaging legal counsel, submitting Freedom of Information Requests (FOIA), hiring a hydrologist, and organizing town halls in collaboration with COAP Inc.

Invitations to the Town Hall were extended to the local MLA (who did not attend), the local MP (who attended), and all local area directors (two of whom attended). An unreported aspect of the story involves the possibility that local directors were unaware of prior FOIA requests to the CVRD and Ministries when the town hall invitations were dispatched.

Land Keepers received a response from Area Director Sierra Acton, declining the invitation to the town hall with the statement, "This is not a CVRD matter." "I respectfully decline". Later when Land Keepers sent her proof of interaction between the CVRD and Nature Trust since 2022, asking for a reply, Ms. Acton did not respond. A second letter was sent as a follow-up, yet still no response. If Ms. Acton was so sure that the CVRD was not involved, surely new evidence would have urged her to check with staff and formulate a response.

Emails obtained through an FOI reveal multiple interactions involving Thomas Reid (Nature Trust), Jeff Moore (Senior Environmental Analyst, CVRD), Kate Miller (Manager, Environmental Services, Division Strategic Services Department, CVRD), and Brian Farquhar (Senior Manager, Parks & Trails Division).

May 11th, 2022 -To Kate Miller from Thomas Reid: "Hi Kate, I hope you are well. If possible I am hoping we can schedule a meeting to discuss some work that we have been doing in the Cowichan Estuary as part of our BCSRIF project"

What is BCSRIF?: 'Fisheries and Oceans Canada - Eight new projects are receiving approximately $10.5M in funding through the British Columbia Salmon Restoration and Innovation Fund (BCSRIF). This brings the total number of projects funded to 38, accounting for $66.9M of $142.85M in total funding allocated.'

2022 Thomas Reid:

"Now that we are entering Year 4 of our project we are starting to focus a significant amount of attention on the implementation of transformational restoration projects (e.g. Dinsdale Farm, Koksilah Marsh) and I would like to discuss with you the steps for engagement with the CVRD. Attached is a summary brochure of what is being considered in the South Cowichan Estuary. I would appreciate it if this attachment could be kept confidential at this time.I look forward to speaking with you soon".

2022 To Jeff Moore from Thomas Reid: "Hi.Jeff -Who usually attends these meetings? We have been engaged with Cowichan Tribes and the Province (Brian Epps) on this potential project for quite some time. NHC is also our lead consultant in doing extensive modelling and engineering assessments on the project too. Thanks, Tom"

We can only surmise the NHC refers to the same company that the CVRD has been working with since 2009: "Since 2009, NHC has completed 15 flood management projects for the Cowichan Valley Regional District (CVRD) and its partners. These studies include the Cowichan Integrated Flood Management Plan (2009), the Risk Assessment of Floodplains and Coastal Sea Level Rise (2019), the Updated Cowichan-Koksilah Flood Mapping Project (2020) and the Shawnigan Flood Preparedness Project (2020)."

From Thomas Reid to Jeff Moore May 25th, 2022:

"Further to my note to Kate below please keep the attachment I originally sent to Kate confidential (see highlighted portion below). There are some project sensitivities that we need to work through before our planned project is made public; hence my question as to who attends your meetings. As an aside - at your upcoming meeting perhaps you may be able to ask the attendees if they would have time for a project-specific meeting on our proposed works via Zoom. teams, wehex etc .. ? Thanks, Tom"

2022 From Thomas Reid to Brian Farquhar:

"Cowichan Restoration Project Brochure.pdf. Fyi. It would be good to also discuss this with you as well as there will be potential implications to Maple Grove Park. As mentioned below I would appreciate it if you could keep this discussion/attachment confidential for now. Thanks, Tom"

The numerous emails from Thomas Reid requesting confidentiality and the non-disclosure of plans to the public, including, possibly, Area Directors like Ms. Acton, raise skepticism about the transparency in the decision-making process. The question arises as to why, despite being presented with evidence, there was no follow-up or response from Ms. Acton and others in similar positions

*(Cow Bay Water Works Kidd well that serves Cowichan Bay residents and business, along with neighbouring properties with wells including the South Cowichan Grass Tennis Club a heritage site over 100 years old)

Thomas Reid's emails came from two different addresses one with a '@ naturetrust' and another from a @ bc.gov.ca address. An inquiry to Mr. Reid has been sent for clarification as to whether he holds two positions. As of the print date, we have not had a response to the inquiry.

- Staff





SOMEONE'S ALWAYS WATCHING...

IT'S US, WE'RE WATCHING.

Duncan:

Feb/March 2024

Duncan council met to reconsider their scramble crosswalk. Concerns noted about traffic backing up along Canada Ave. Protected left turns are now being considered as they accomplish the same goal of "protecting pedestrians."

The Official Community Plan (OCP), which includes the UN 17 Sustainable Goals, was adopted with Cllr. McKinlay and Cllr. Bruce opposed.

With Duncan officially recognizing UNDRIP in their OCP, Councillors Bruce and Mckinlay considered the potential impact of what the term 'unceded' means and asked if it may be passed by a lawyer for clarification. Mayor Staples indicated that questioning such things was akin to conspiracy theories.

The council Voted on the highest level of step code in new buildings, which removes natural gas as an option.

CVRD:

Feb/March 2024

March saw a large protest outside the CVRD building when people learned of the almost 20% tax increase. The room was filled with onlookers and the speakers list was at its maximum, as the board listened to the grievances around their budget. One grievance was the sudden increase to the 'parkland acquisition' fund from over 900k to 2.2 million. During the deliberations, Rob Douglas suggested a few minor cut backs, but the board felt they were not significant enough. When the question was called about the 'parkland acquisition fund' Director Nicholson was the first to shoot up her hand to raise taxes for the fund, yet it failed and the fund was reduced back to 900k a year. Rob Douglas mentioned Canada's 30 by 30 plan, suggesting that the CVRD will be looking at 'protecting' 30% of its land and 30% of its water from humans by 2030. Takes then fell to just over 16% increase, suggesting the last-minute increase, allowed the board to claw that 3% back to 'look good'.

Other funding in the budget included: Further funding toward parks, parkland, and active transportation. Increase the Capital Expenditure, vehicles and machinery from $75,000 to $125,000; and increase the transfer from the 2023 Surplus from $0 to $50,000. General Government (Information Technology) $540,000. Regional Housing Trust Fund to provide short-term financing for $517,862.19 to support the purchase of property located at 447 Festubert Street, to establish affordable housing units and support services for adults experiencing homelessness.

North Cowichan:

Feb/March 2024

Councillor Toporowski recused herself from voting on the West Vista Terrace Development, promising nearly 200 homes near Herd Rd, the development caused much controversy for council, which is outlined on pages 8-9 in our current edition.

Councillor Justice was successful in persuading council to ask the Ministry of Transportation to get public feedback on the proposed overpass across the Trans Canada Highway by the new school.

Hidden amid routine policy, the council passed Bylaw No. 3948, allowing any person acting on behalf of the district to be a bylaw officer, including authorized use of force.

Council voted to increase Sewer and Water Parcel taxes for Chemainus, Crofton, and South End sewer services and increase water parcel taxes for Chemainus and South End water services.

PROMISES ON THE WIND: THE GAP BETWEEN VISION AND EXECUTION

WEST VISTA TERRACE: A CASE STUDY IN NORTH COWICHAN'S DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGES

Nestled just minutes from North Cowichan's municipal heartbeat, a stone's throw away from the new hospital, the West Vista Terrace project emerged in 2020, promising to redefine the local landscape with its vision of 200 residential units and a welcoming hotel off Herd Road.

The development was envisioned to facilitate the needs of the community, and the new Cowichan District Hospital. The architect of this dream, John Lichtenwald, bolstered by a 100-year lease agreement with the Cowichan Tribes, embarked on a meticulous journey to ensure that every step, from conducting artifact checks to securing water infrastructure, was in lockstep with both respects for the land and the highest standards of planning, Additionally, Mr. Lichtenwald reached out to a local Indigenous-led contracting company Ravenstone, whom he was excited to have on board for this large project. The years of waiting on North Cowichan to approve the first shovel in the ground took a toll on Mr.Lichtenwald's family's pocketbook and his wife's physical health. After the Municipality finalized the Official Community Plan (OCP) in 2022, they then began re-drawing urban containment boundary lines, which were meant as 'boundaries' within which, almost all future growth was meant to be built.

Mr. Lichtenwald's 30-acre property, originally within a growth area, was suddenly cut out of the Local Growth Area (LGA) and redesignated as a "future growth area". This arbitrary shifting of the line in question was drawn right down the middle of Herd Rd, a move suggested by Cllr. Justice in a council meeting. The redrawing of the line, striking out the north side of Herd Rd. caused this property, and others on the same side's value to be cut in half. Many other builders, all over North Cowichan, found themselves in the same situation after the decision, which has led to huge financial losses for the municipality in tax revenue as builders either pack up and leave or never get their projects off the ground.

In 2023 a request was made to Mr. Lichtenwald from the municipality asking for two corners of his property on Herd Road to be handed over for the creation of a roundabout of which he denied the municipality, given the current status of his application.

In the face of mounting challenges, including loan repayments on the land soaring to $100,000 per month—a testament to the unwavering belief in the project's potential—Mr. Lichtenwald reached out to political figures like David Eby and Doug Routley, seeking support for this innovative, and much-needed, small community plan. The local community's voice, amplified by a 300-signature petition was presented to council. A presentation to council in late February 2024 was presented by one of the planners who developed the award-winning Bell Mckinnon Local Area Plan, the same one the council accepted a few years before. Yet, the council's decision over approval of Vista Terrace was deferred once again, this time to March 6th.

This tale of West Vista Terrace, with its unfulfilled promise and the battle against bureaucracy, is a reflection on the balance between development aspirations and the heavy hand of municipal governance that many other builders experience..

Policy Shifts and Political Promises

During the election campaign, candidates like Bruce Findlay and Chris Istace stood out, promising to champion the development community's cause and streamline processes to encourage growth. Both candidates were fresh faces in the area, bringing new ideas to the forefront of local politics. Councillor Istace voiced strong opinions on housing. As asked of candidates by OneCowichan, "What do you consider the three most pressing issues facing local government and the one most important thing local government should do on each one?" Chris replied, "Housing - Facilitate building of housing immediately and treat it with the urgency it deserves. Remove exclusionary zoning and empower staff to approve new builds quickly and efficiently for developers and residents." His stance made housing a central issue of the campaign, addressing the community's need for more inclusive and rapid development processes. Bruce Findlay, in line with



Photo: WestVista OCP Amendment Application

campaign promises, swiftly introduced the 24-month amnesty period motion in January 2023. This would have represented a tangible step towards alleviating some of the development community's frustrations in North Cowichan. This motion aimed to assist landowners caught in the transition period following the adoption of the new OCP and adjustment of the UCB, enabling them to continue with their development plans under the previous guidelines. The proposal was seen as a proactive measure to support ongoing and planned projects, ensuring they wouldn't be derailed by the recent policy changes. However, despite the initial optimism surrounding Findlay's motion, it was ultimately defeated in a 4-3 vote at the council meeting. The decision not to adopt the 24-month amnesty period was a blow to those who had hoped for a more flexible approach to development under the new council. Among those voting against the motion was Councillor Chris Istace, whose campaign had heavily featured promises of supporting development and reducing bureaucratic obstacles for developers and residents alike. Istace's vote against the motion served as a stark reminder to the development community of the challenges that persisted within North Cowichan's political landscape. Despite the fresh faces and promises of change, the defeat of the motion underscored a continuity of the 'same ole' cautious approach to development, leaving many to question the council's commitment to facilitating growth and addressing the housing needs of the community.

The Ongoing Development Dilemma

The development community, still grappling with the constraints imposed by the newly revised OCP and new UCB boundaries, has found little relief. Another example of these new arbitrary lines affected a quaint, 15-unit, Indian Crescent development. Under the scrutiny of council members like Councillor Justice and his strict interpretation of the OCP's 15-minute accessibility standard—highlighted by his criticism of the proposed development's lack of proximity to



Photo: WestVista OCP Amendment Application

grocery stores, showed an overly rigid adherence to the new planning guidelines. In a time when flexible, innovative solutions are desperately needed to address the housing crisis, the project was considered to be, "Seriously Misaligned'' according to Councillor Justice, despite being within a stone's throw of the new UCB lines, and a 10-minute bike trip to the nearest store.

This new approach not only stifles significant development projects but also seems increasingly out of step with the realities of a national housing affordability crisis, which is exacerbating economic pressures on Canadians from coast to coast.

Council Confrontation

The council meeting to debate the West Vista project on March 6th, 2023, saw a full house as residents, neighbours of the proposed build, and Ravenstone Construction came to give impassioned speeches to council in support of the development. Nearly a dozen speakers emphasized the absurdity of the Urban Containment Boundary (UCB) shift—a line in the middle of Herd Rd. The project was poised to generate over $60 million in property taxes by 2050, offer a new hotel, and contribute massively to local infrastructure, yet it found itself at the mercy of bureaucratic gridlock. During the council meeting, Councillor Debra Toporowski's recusal stirred the assembly. She explained, "I have decided to recuse myself from this matter, given the impact of the decision on some voting members of Cowichan Tribes. I'm currently seeking Cowichan Tribes Council," adding to the intrigue, "There may be a perception that I may be influenced in my voting on this matter in an effort to obtain votes from Cowichan Tribes election." This action, ostensibly taken on ethical grounds, fueled speculation, particularly because of Toporowski's known voting alignment with Mayor Rob Douglas. The room's tension escalated as Tek Manhas highlighted this move with a point of order, suggesting to many that Toporowski's decision was a calculated attempt to navigate the complex political landscape, avoiding a direct stance against Indigenous support for Ravenstone Construction and preserving party cohesion. Councillor Chris Istace's comments during the council meeting veered sharply from his campaign trail promises, now favouring government-led housing projects like BC Housing and BC Builds over private developments. By emphasizing a backlog of infrastructure needs and critiquing the financial model of new developments, Istace suggested, "This continual thought that new development is what sets us on the course of being financially secure is ill-conceived." However, his critique overlooks the standard practice where private developers cover the costs of necessary infrastructure improvements, effectively reducing the financial burden on the municipality. This model not only accelerates community enhancements but also expands the tax base without leveraging existing public funds, a point Istace's current stance seems to miss. Moreover, Istace's focus on maintaining developments strictly within the urban containment boundary, particularly given the minimal geographical discrepancy of projects like West Vista Terrace which sits 6 feet from the new boundary line, showcases a rigid adherence to policy over practical community needs. This rigid stance illustrates a departure from the proactive development stance he previously championed. Istace's shift towards long-term, government-dependent solutions, while potentially aimed at fiscal prudence, fails to acknowledge the immediate benefits and financial contributions that private development offers to municipal coffers and the broader community.

Mayor Rob Douglas, celebrated for his staunch advocacy of reconciliation and inclusivity, surprisingly chose silence over championing the merits of Ravenstone Construction's involvement in the West Vista Terrace project. Despite Ravenstone's team ardently advocating for their role in uplifting the Indigenous community through the development during their speeches to council, Douglas steered clear of this dialogue. He anchored his stance in unwavering policy adherence, highlighting the 2022 Official Community Plan's visions. Douglas argued, "Proceeding with this application would starkly deviate from our newly established community plan's vision and policies", falling back on the tired argument that his decision mirrored the collective will of the community gathered through "extensive consultations for the OCP".

This discussion brings to light a crucial debate: the council's reliance on governmental (taxpayer) support for community development under Mayor Douglas's guidance, which may inadvertently overshadow the vital contributions of grassroots movements like Ravenstone's. Amid the evolving dialogue around UNDRIP and its addition to the OCP—one must question whether these principles will manifest in real, actionable change. Dan Williams of RavenStone articulated in spring 2023, stating, "This contract is real Economic Reconciliation – something I like to call Reconcili-Action," He emphasized, "Signing the Memorandum of Understanding to be the main sub-trade contractor on the West Vista project is a real opportunity for an Indigenous company to be a leader in a major development. Even within our own land in the Cowichan Valley, we've had to pick up the scraps from other projects. We've had to fight for opportunities like this." It's initiatives like RavenStone's that exemplify the type of progress we should champion: the private sector stepping up, engaging directly with its workforce, and fostering opportunities, dignity, and a culture of innovation, removed from the constraints of government dependency.

Despite being within the 15-minute zone, presentation by a professional planner, twenty thousand in application fees, a petition filled with 300 local signatures, the blessings of local First Nations, and a room filled with impassioned speakers, the motion brought forward by Cllr. Caljouw to allow West Vista Terrace to be built was defeated in a tie. The final vote consisted of three (Cllr. Findlay, Caljouw, and Manhas) for the build, and three (Cllr. Istace, Justice, and Mayor Douglas) against.

The West Vista Terrace Reflection

In the aftermath of the West Vista Terrace project's defeat, North Cowichan offered a refund of half the original application fees, which amounted to a little more than 9 thousand dollars - a gesture insufficient against the project's years of effort. Cllr. Findlay brought forward a motion to secure a full refund, which was passed, though far from a victory, a mere pittance for what the Lichtenwald family was made to go through for years only to have their vision and dream for an amazing addition to the valley diminished. This series of events, marked by the project's rejection and the consequential financial impact on the Lichtenwalds, indicates why there is so much skepticism by builders who consider projects in the Cowichan Valley and hear so many similar stories.

- A. Richards & J. Enslow

TRACK AND TRACE WORLD FOR THE GLOBAL INVENTORY PROGRAM: YOUR GARBAGE IS NEXT?



Photo: www.weber.edu/wsuimages

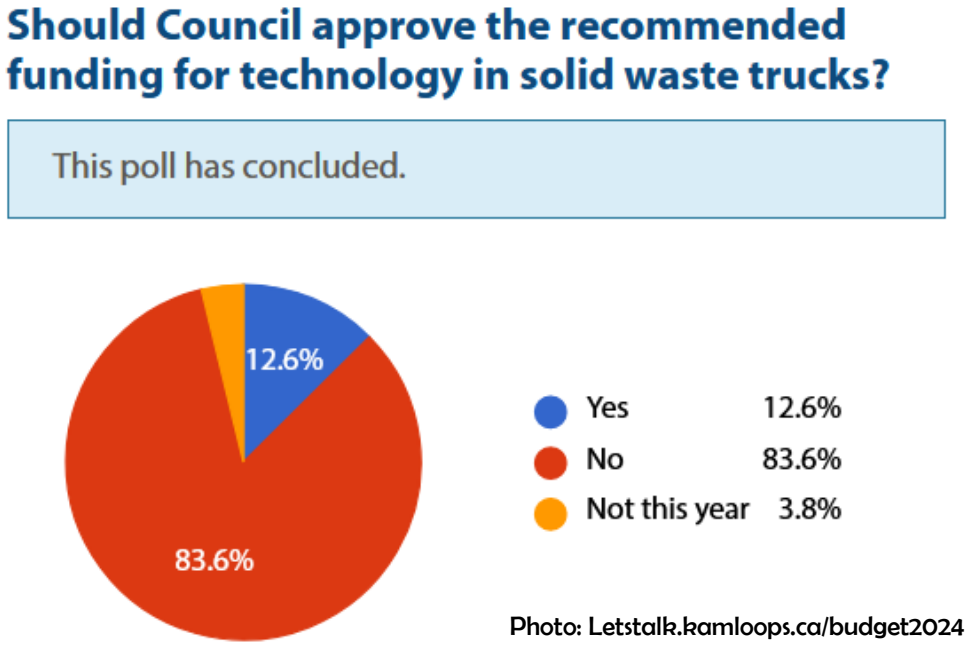


Photo: Letstalk.kamloops.ca/budget2024

Have you noticed the growing intrusion of tracking and tracing in your daily life?

Loyalty cards monitor purchases, debit cards track dining habits, Smart Meter technology, and now, even your garbage might be under surveillance. The recent initiative by North Cowichan to affix stickers on recycling bins, notifying residents of contaminants, seems to mark the beginning of this unsettling trend. Despite the higher costs, Prairie Robotics' AI system could extensively monitor households, raising concerns about privacy. The dual-use nature of AI prompts questions about a potential shift from education to fines and penalties. North Cowichan's contemplation of RFID and camera technology for waste tracking also stirs worries about a dystopian level of privacy intrusion.

In response to inquiries about the consideration of RFID and camera technology, North Cowichan stated:

"Thank you for your inquiry. North Cowichan is planning to go out for a proposal for the new carts in the next month or two. We are considering the RFID tags and will be requesting proponents provide a cost for this item. As you indicated, they are a great tool to help regulate contamination. With the tags, there is also cameras and software required for the trucks to complete the tracking process. The costs and benefits of the RFID tags and brand of the cart will be evaluated soon, and a final decision will happen later this year. Please let me know if you have any other questions."

Following insights from a group in Kamloops, who heard a resounding "NO" during the public engagement process, causing their council to vote against the funding, we hope that North Cowichan will also look to the public before considering implementing the expensive, and intrusive technology.

More Issues with the AI monitoring on cans include the possibility of expanding the list of banned items over time. Additionally, there is the potential for AI to send detailed reports to marketing companies or even governmental bodies, raising questions about the transparency and potential misuse of such information. As part of the 'Climate Action' initiative, the system's capacity to track people's consumption could lead to broader privacy concerns, emphasizing the need for a careful evaluation of the technology's implications.

Despite a lifetime of recycling habits, the push to reduce 'contaminated' recycling to 3%, will this trend eventually force a move towards zero percent, mirroring global and local initiatives like Zero Carbon and Zero Waste? But is the consumer the one to point the AI finger at fully? There are concerns around contamination at the site of pick up, and even where this waste meets its end of life. Documentaries like CBC Marketplace's "Tracking Your Plastic: Exposing Recycling Myths" on YouTube, exposed companies like GFL. who are part of similar initiatives elsewhere but have faced allegations of dumping plastic waste despite public sorting efforts.

Grants from the higher levels of government come with many strings attached, some of these include reporting emission levels. How would a city or town do that besides through gas purchases and BC Hydro data? We have explored this concept before when delving into the attachments that are available for the new LED streetlights, but this tracking industry is worth trillions, and all the big names from Google to Microsoft are partnered with many groups such as The Open Earth Foundation. Open Earth Foundation offers cities software called City Catalyst, which presents itself as the one-stop-shop for a complete AI monitoring system, from garbage to wastewater, they "have your back" as it were. Is this a slow tip-toe to tyranny that we are seeing or an innocent desire to monitor all human activity by billionaires for the greater good?

Alternative approaches, such as random contamination checks, or monitoring specific neighbourhoods, can be considered in lieu of more track-and-trace technological overreach.

If this seems worrisome to you, you can write to North Cowichan Council at council@northcowichan.ca to express your concerns, and call for public input on this possible digital overreach.

- A. Richards & kamloopscsc.org





AUXILIUM MORTGAGE

Auxilium simply means, "care, aid, assist and support". We believe that your home is more than a roof over your head. It's where friends gather, families are raised, and memories are made. Buying a home is both a rewarding experience and an important cornerstone in your financial plan. We don't simply view a mortgage as debt, but rather an overall piece of the monetary puzzle.

When you choose to work with the Auxilium Team, we:



Save your time and provide choice. We have access to a wide variety of lenders, which gives you access to a wide range of products.

Help you avoid unnecessary risk. Having closed over $826M in mortgages since 2011, has provided our team with the knowledge and experience to fully understand what lenders look for and more importantly how they qualify borrowers. As well our team can also identify products with unforeseen penalties, fees, and charges to save you from the financial implications of a bad decision.

Handle all the details. We will manage every detail of the transaction with the real estate agent, lender, appraiser, credit agency, and lawyers. And we keep you up to date throughout the entire process.

We take a global & holistic approach to the financial well-being of our clients. As an independent, locally owned, and operated mortgage brokerage, we are not accountable to a national or head office, but instead, accountable to you, the client. With access to over 50 lenders, ranging from Canada's largest banks to smaller credit unions and trust companies, we're able to save you time and money by shopping around for the best rate and product. Together, our team has accumulated more than 100 years of mortgage experience and knowledge that we apply to each client. By working as a team, we are each able to bring our expertise to your file. But you don't have to take our word for it; with over 2,056 funded mortgages to date, read what our clients have to say about their experience on our reviews page, Google, or Facebook.

Auxilium Mortgage is an accredited member of the Better Business Bureau, which includes a commitment to make a good-faith effort to resolve any consumer complaints. We are also two-time winners of the BBB's Annual Torch Award in the Professional Services category.

Whether you're a first-time buyer, are looking to remortgage or refinance, are in a tough credit situation, or are looking for an investment opportunity, Auxilium Mortgage has an innovative and creative solution to meet your mortgage needs. As a team, we are committed to helping you both now and for the long term.

Located: 307 Goldstream Avenue, Victoria BC.

Contact Us at 250-590-6520

Email mortgagehelp@auxiliummortgage.com











Dear WWIND,

Let me tell you Cowichan Valley, something's amiss. It's not just about punching the clock, getting the kids off to school, or making sure the lawn's mowed anymore. Nope, it seems we've all been enlisted, unbeknownst to us, in the grand task of saving the world. And how, you ask? By embracing bike lanes as if they're our new religion, courtesy of our local council's ambition to make us the poster child for battling global warming.

Now, don't get me wrong. I'm all for a cleaner planet. But when did the collective wisdom of our community get sidelined for some pie-in-the-sky provincial mandates? Back in the day, wisdom was passed down from one generation to the next, like a cherished family heirloom. We balanced checkbooks, not carbon footprints. We worried about making ends meet, not making headlines in the fight against climate change.

It's funny, in a town where nearly half of us are either retired or eyeing it, you'd think our priorities might align more with securing a future for our kids right here, rather than attempting to single-handedly cool down the earth. My dad used to say, "Focus on keeping your own backyard clean." Guess that's not fashionable anymore.

We're a community of hardworking folks, trying to raise families, enjoy a little of what life offers, and maybe, just maybe, save a bit for the future. Yet, here we are, caught up in global aspirations that seem as distant as the moon. The good old dollar, as true today as it ever was, has taken a back seat to the latest trend in global salvation.

I miss the days when common sense wasn't so uncommon. When community input meant more than just a nod in the council meeting before going ahead with whatever the flavor of the month is. I'm all for progress, but let's not forget who we are and where we come from in the rush to save the world.

A Concerned Valley Resident

Dear WWIND,

Cowichan Valley residents came out en masse, in the middle of a cold, windy, wet afternoon, to make it known that they are at their limits, many even beyond them. Constituents are struggling in ways that I think were not fully grasped nor being taken seriously until a petition of over 3000 signatures was generated in a very short time and presented to the Regional Directors, following multiple speeches of hardships and strong opposition to this year's tax increase of 19.33%. The back drop of the CVRD's board meeting was a side walk filled with umbrellas and soggy cardboard signs expressing statements such as: "16 YEAR OLD REFERENDUM IS 2024 RESIDENTS FINANCIAL BURDEN!", "FAMILIES TAXED TO THE MAX", "CVRD PARKS CAN'T FEED/HOUSE FAMILIES" & "TAXED ENOUGH ALREADY!".

I personally attended the protest, however, was unable to get into the building. Instead, I spent time on the sidewalk with fellow friends and neighbours. We watched the media interview protesters, expressing that we were witnessing a "TAX REVOLT ", and in many ways I think they are correct. While listening to the board meeting online, I was moved by many of the speakers and the delegation, whom took time out of their work day to be present and voice their concerns, which turned out to be the concerns of many.

I have thought a lot since the meeting, thinking of how we can move forward as a "WE" and not a "THEY vs. THEM". There is so much disconnection and festering emotions, and sometimes I think we forget that we are all living in this valley together, and yet not all living the same realities. For some it seems the worry and fear is in the distant future of "potentials" and "fear mongering projections", while others are worried and fearful of what they are CURRENTLY living through and grasping at straws to try and keep their homes and feed their families. I'm grateful every day to not be living in either of these camps at any extreme, however my family and I do have to watch our dollars and cents with the hopes that we can make it through this very challenging time, and still have a place to call home once inflation and taxation settles down.

In our home, we are also avid nature lovers, appreciate green spaces, and feel a sense of pride that we live in such a beautiful part of the country. I'm curious if maybe the reason we are at such a heated tipping point, is not necessarily because residents "oppose" or "disagree" with the Park Land Acquisition Fund and other mandated forms of extracting money from us… but if its more in how the system works. Times are tough, this is a fact, its also a fact that when times are tough, people have less tolerance and are more willing to stand up and push back. I think what the main issue might be, is that people have had it with being told they "will pay for this, no exceptions". Where is the choice? Where is the understanding that not everyone's priorities are the same? Where is the reasoning that families and seniors being able to keep their homes is less of a priority then being able to acquire green spaces?

I wonder if municipalities and regional districts, instead of mandating payments through taxes and the like, what if they gave the opportunity for those in the community that would and could prioritize larger "donations" to the Park Land Acquisition Fund, to do that, while not putting that huge and sometimes life altering burden, on those in our communities that simply CANNOT take on any more strain, or quite simply do not agree that this is of top priority?

If the Rob Douglas', Christopher Justice's, Alison Nicholson's and David Slade's of the valley feel so strongly about funding the PLAF, no one should stop them from forgoing bottles of wine or cups of coffee, and putting whatever amount they feel comfortable with personally donating to the fund, equally though, the families of the CVRD whom are reaching out to neighbours for extra canned goods, or dropping their children out of sports teams just to pay their essential bills, should not be forced into funding the PLAF.

I would suggest the board lower the PLAF to somewhere between $200,000-$500,000 and allow the opportunity for individuals to add extra to their property taxes should they CHOOSE to. What seems to be lacking in our lives is choice. We are told we must pay for this even if we do not use or do not want it. Bring choice back to the people, and I believe people will be happier and better off for it. The Park Land Acquisition Fund is only one of many areas where I think choice could be, and should be, brought back to the people. Imagine a little check box, where property owners could mark "yes" to $20, $50, $100's extra on their property tax bill, knowing full well that in that moment they can afford it and not have to break the bank to do so. Thank you for considering my words and thoughts, I'm not an elected official, I don't know how things run at a board table, but I am a mother of two and a property owner. I strive to feed my family healthy nutritious foods, local when possible, and I forgo the idea of little luxuries, outings, and adventures all the time, to make sure that I am not sacrificing the basics that I feel are essential for raising strong, healthy and vibrant daughters. In better years, I may even be one of the CVRD residents who would CHOOSE to donate extra to the PLAF, but for now it is not in my family's best interest, nor is it of top priority, and I will not be shamed, guilted or fear mongered into what some other person's priorities are. **Savanah Wright. Duncan, Area B**

Carrot and Ginger Feel Good Soup



Ingredients

2 lbs peeled and diced carrot

1 large diced onion

1/2 cup fine diced ginger

10 cups veggie stock

2 cups coconut milk

1 lime

Salt and white pepper to taste

Sauté carrots, onion and ginger until soft. Add stock and simmer for at least 30 min on a medium low heat. Once the veggies are soft enough to blend take off the heat and use a hand blender or transfer into a blender a batch at a time to blend smooth. Transfer soup back into the pot and add the coconut milk. Put back on the heat and bring back to a simmer. If the soup is too thick add a small amount of stock at a time to thin it out to the consistency you want. Roll, cut and squeeze your lime into the soup, add salt and pepper to taste. Reduce heat to low and let simmer while you get the garnish ready.

Garnish

1 cup of yogurt
2 tbsp turmeric
Juice of 1 lime
Crumbled feta
Chopped parsley
Optional: add cornbread or toast point of choice

Add yogurt, turmeric and lime to a bowl and whisk. Add to a ziplock bag and cut the corner to use as a piping bag. Plate your soup.
Pipe your yogurt mixer on top of your soup however you like. Then add crumbled feta and chopped parsley.

Healing factors of ginger:

Ginger is an antioxidant and helps with arthritis, inflammation, and various types of infections. Ginger also can reduce the risks of diabetes and cancer.

Healing factors of carrots:

This vitamin A rich vegetable helps with dry eyes, night vision, weight loss, skin health, immunity to colds, digestive health and bone health.

Healing factors of turmeric:

This Indian spice helps with arthritis, digestive disorders, respiratory infections, allergies, liver diseases, depression, heart heath, Alzheimer's, cancer and also is a potent anti inflammatory and antioxidant.

This soup is truly a healing soup. If I feel a cold coming on this is my go-to immune system booster. Enjoy this amazing soup and all its healing powers.

- Chef Eron / Eron Gaskell

RALLY FOR BILL C-368 AND PROTECT NATURAL HEALTH

By now, you may have heard about or recall that I wrote previously asking you to take direct action to reclaim our Natural Health freedom to purchase and use Natural Health Products (NHPs). Canadians have sent hundreds of thousands of emails, letters, and postcards to Members of Parliament (MPs) expressing dissatisfaction about how the changes will negatively affect the industry, and all Canadians who rely on NHPs to support their daily health and well-being. And there's still more to do!

Health Canada bureaucrats are working to suppress, control and limit our access to Natural Health Products (NHP) by imposing unnecessary stricter regulations, fines, and threats of unfair fees meant to cripple and destroy the natural health community? Why? More $$$ and control. This is outrageous and must be investigated!

Over 71% of Canadians use natural health products on a daily basis, and Canada is already one of the highest regulated countries. Time to reclaim our power as people over the voted-in politicians and under-handed bureaucrats who need to be reminded who pays their salaries and bonuses – we do -- the Canadian citizen!

We don't need these changes, we didn't ask for them and they will bring more direct suffering, costs and hassle to already stressed and max-taxed Canadians. We need government out of our personal lives and NSP's de-regulated and these over-the-top regulations and fees stopped now.

Many Canadians are only alive today because of NHPs, and many more only enjoy quality of life because they manage serious health conditions with natural health products. There is no proof – zero -- that there has ever been any serious health risk scientifically or medically identified by a natural health product! Did you know you are 14x more likely to be struck by lightning than to be killed by a natural health product?

Please educate yourself about what Health Canada has set into motion by downloading and reading the Discussion Paper …. This is a must read document for all Canadians. Learn more and take action:
https://tinyurl.com/billc358

A group of concerned citizens met with our distracted voted-in MP, Alistair MacGregor to tell him we are outraged about Health Canada's evil tactics and plans, and to ask that he stand up to the bullies. We received a follow up response that was a diversion to another area, and not a solution to our real concerns. And, we are still waiting for a response that directly addresses our request to have action taken to stop this steam-rolling of injustice and tyranny by Health Canada. Add your voice and email Alistair at alistair.macgregor@parl.gc.ca

There is some good news! In early December, 2023, MP Blaine Calkins of Red Deer-Lacombe, Alberta took a stand in support of our cause and officially tabled our Private Member's Bill in the House of Commons. The Bill was seconded by MP Brad Vis, (MP for Mission-Matsqui-Fraser Canyon) and given the official Bill number C-368.

This action taken by MPs Calkins and Vis effectively amplifies our voices, champions the cause for the NHP industry and acts in the interests of every Canadian citizen that relies on NHPs. Get involved and support Bill C-368, our Private Member's Bill. Please sign the petition and share it: **https://tinyurl.com/prvbill**

We need to demand that they uphold every Canadian citizen's most fundamental rights and freedoms – yours and mine – to choose how we care for our own health and decide what goes into our bodies. We are fed-up with government intervention and control at all levels. Enough is enough!

Please insist on the following from your elected Member of Parliament, Alistair MacGregor and all other Members of Parliament across Canada:

> Repeal sections 500 to 504 of the Budget Implementation Act, 2023, No. 1 (formerly Bill C-47*) and undo the time it has been law since June 22, 2023 so that no manufacturer, retailer, or practitioner can be persecuted for being open and transparent about the benefit of NHP's and subjected to $5,000,000 per day fines;

* Bill C-47 was passed and became law on June 22, 2023. Although it was primarily a Budget Bill, it was unexpectedly and sneakily revised to include five sections that put undue and unfair pressure on natural health products without necessary prior consultation with Canadian consumers, practitioners and manufacturers. This is unjustified and borders on malfeasance.

We need protection from Health Canada, not from natural products. And our local voices should be heard by Alistair MacGregor who is responsible to his constituents. We are disappointed by his lack of response and follow up on this issue, and ask you to add your voice of dissatisfaction, and tell him we deserve and demand better! **Visit nhppa.org/take-action/ and rumble.com/c/NHPPA**

CRISIS IN THE WATER: THE BATTLE FOR SURVIVAL OF FISHING ON VANCOUVER ISLAND



Photo: WWIND File Photo



Photo: Affected areas - Canada.ca

Will provincial mandates shut down fishing in BC?

Part One: Reason one to shut down recreational and food fishing in B.C.

In part one of a three part series we look at a global trend squeezing farmers that has now reached our fishermen, and we embark on this series with a report on an industry grappling with the consequences of flawed science and provincial mandates influenced by NGOs. We also recommend the short documentary on Youtube: "No Fishing Allowed: Trudeau's Plan to Decimate an Entire Industry" by Aaron Gunn

These narratives echo a familiar theme worldwide: livelihoods and food sources restricted based on models and predictions, much like climate science, without consulting those who have toiled the land and sea for generations. They are left to confront giants armed only with their knowledge and a modest budget.

Last year, Port Renfrew (P.R.) witnessed a 70% loss in its Fish Guiding and tourist industry, reducing annual income from 25 million to 16.5 million. With the proposed cancellation of all fishing this year, the town faces an uncertain future. Approximately 68% of real estate in the P.R. area is up for sale, and the resort cabins felt the impact last year. What has transformed this once-bustling fishing and tourist town? In 2019, Bill C-68 granted the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) enhanced power over regulating fishing, shifting its focus from overseeing the fishing economy to habitat and marine wildlife. Since then, mandates and policies have gradually encroached on local fishermen and recreational sports fishing jobs, shortening the fishing season and imposing catch limits of the prized Chinook allowed to be caught from two fish to one allowed to be caught.

Excuses provided by the province for implementing these changes are varied, and this series will explore them in a three-part installment. For now, we delve into the 'Orca' excuse.

Some mistakenly refer to the Southern Resident Orca pod as a 'species,' ignoring the fact that they are one of many pods, including transient pods which do come in shallow waters, but to feed on seals and not Chinook. This mischaracterization informs policies centered around the survival of one group of orcas.

Excuse 1: "The Southern Resident Orca are starving." The areas being closed around Port Renfrew are shallow fishing grounds, unsuitable for the Northern and Southern Orca that feed on fish, especially Chinook, diving deep to hunt fish as shallow waters are not ideal. Fishermen, with decades of experience, affirm seeing Southern Killer whales rarely in these spots. In 2023, the fishermen observed one of the largest Chinook runs, suggesting fish quantity and the fishing grounds are not the issue. Sea Lions at river mouths also contribute to predation.

Excuse 2: "A baby from the pod died." This overfishing argument is rendered moot without addressing pollution. Metals found in the deceased baby's stomach were also present in its mother's breast milk. The call for pollution reduction and ocean cleanup is conspicuously absent. Additionally, inbreeding among Southern resident can play a factor in these orca's health due to their aversion to the Northern resident pod which could be alleviated, according to fishermen, by pairing a northern and a southern orca. However, the 'no captivity law' precludes this option.

Excuse 3: "The noise in the ocean." A significant portion of the noise (69%) comes from BC ferries, 18% from cargo shipping, and 0.6% from recreational fishing.

As we continue on the series to expose flawed science, 30 by 30 agenda, and the NGO's involved, we will leave you with a letter from the president of the Port Alberni Chamber:

" The Honourable Diane Lebouthillier, Minister of Fisheries, Oceans, and the Canadian Coast Guard Subject: Proposed 2024/25 Fishing Closures - Port Renfrew - Vancouver Island Dear Minister Lebouthillier, I am writing to you today representing the community of Port Renfrew, British Columbia, situated on the southwest coast of Vancouver Island. Historically, Port Renfrew relied heavily on logging for employment and economic opportunities. However, with the decline in logging activities and the relocation of forestry operations, our once vibrant community faced economic collapse. In response to this downturn, our community embarked on a remarkable journey of economic transformation, pivoting towards tourism as a viable alternative. Central to this transition has been the development of our recreational fishery, which has flourished over the past two decades. Recognizing the potential of our natural resources, our community has invested significantly in infrastructure to support this burgeoning sector, attracting visitors drawn to the exceptional fishing experience that Port Renfrew offers.

The ongoing and untimely discussions surrounding the anticipated actions by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) have sparked profound concerns within our community. The prospect of closing the recreational fishery poses an imminent threat to our economy, endangering numerous

livelihoods dependent on this industry. Many businesses in the community have already taken deposits for 2024, to facilitate fishing charters, and accommodations bookings for this year's fishing season. The fact that we are even engaging in a discussion that has the potential to close another major area of our fishing grounds is creating great harm to this community. Port Renfrew sustains a permanent full time population of approximately 500 individuals including members of the Pacheedaht First Nation. The economic vitality of our community hinges on various local establishments, including restaurants, hotels, general stores, gas stations, post offices, and educational institutions. Moreover, recreational fishing serves as a vital pillar for employment opportunities, sustaining community members in crucial roles such as volunteer firefighters and first responders.

Allow me to outline the economic significance of the recreational fishery to our community.

Estimated conservatively, in one season the recreational charter fishery brings to Port Renfrew about 150 anglers per day for up to 165 days per season. During this season the economic influx of this fishery is approximately: $ 60,000/day on fishing charters, $ 7,500/day on fish processing services, $ 15,000/day on accommodations, $ 9,000/day in local restaurants, $ 6,000/day on gas for their vehicles, $ 5,500/day on groceries and sundries- These numbers are based on recent surveys of our largest restaurant, accommodation, and fishing charter operators. Conservatively, the recreational charter fishery injects at least $103,000 per day into Port Renfrew's economy. Notably, this estimation excludes the considerable number of visitors who bring their own equipment and do not utilize the services of our recreational charter operators, as well as the non-fishing family and friends that accompany, who spend their days taking advantage of the visitor amenities and businesses ashore. When factoring in these additional groups, our surveys show this sector contributing another $55,000/day. Consequently, the industry's overall impact exceeds $158,000/day, totaling $26,070,000 over a 165-day season to just the Port Renfrew area. The projected economic impact of over $26 million annually in the Port Renfrew area does not account for the enduring loss of businesses and job opportunities. These proposed regulations directly jeopardize the livelihoods of over 100 small business owners in the area, potentially forcing them to close permanently. The long-term economic repercussions of these short- sighted regulations are estimated to extend into the hundreds of millions for this region. It is imperative to consider the economic well-being of British Columbians along the BC coast when deliberating on such regulatory measures. We strongly urge the DFO to adopt a truly balanced approach that safeguards both our environment and our economy.

Historically, the DFO have been influenced more by political considerations than by robust scientific principles. These regulations pose a profound threat to small communities throughout British Columbia, with entire towns and numerous families already feeling the adverse effects of these politically influenced decisions. Despite claims of being science-backed and aimed at protecting Southern Resident Killer Whales, the current proposed regulations and the static area closures enacted over the last number of years disregard the DFO's own research and data. The static closures implemented previously for small recreational vessels have demonstrated negligible effectiveness in safeguarding the Southern Resident Killer Whales in this area or any area where they have been enacted. This strategy has notably impacted the economy of many small communities throughout British Columbia with limited measurable environmental benefits. It is evident that this approach is inherently flawed and warrants careful reconsideration before any further measures are enacted.

The newly proposed area closures are purportedly justified by "predictive spatiotemporal logistic models." However, significant gaps exist in the support for these models within the wealth of data collected by the DFO. Furthermore, there is a notable absence of new data to support the proposed expansion of closure areas beyond current measures. Predictive modeling typically serves as a recourse when data is lacking; however, in this instance, decades of studies have meticulously tracked the movements of these whales, often on a daily basis.

The insistence on relying solely on predictive modeling appears suspect, potentially aimed at misleading the public. This approach seems more aligned with the agenda of the DFO rather than an accurate reflection of the environmental reality. The DFO possesses viable and effective regulatory alternatives, specifically expanding the "mobile avoidance zones" around Southern Resident Killer Whales during their occasional presence in the Juan De Fuca Strait. This alternative approach has demonstrated efficacy in safeguarding the whales without disproportionately impacting surrounding communities. We strongly urge the DFO to revoke these ineffective static closures entirely, or at the very least refrain from further expanding them. This approach mirrors that of our neighbours to the south in Washington State, where these avoidance zones have been found to be more effective and aligned with the data collected over the same period on the very same whales in question. At times, the DFO has justified these static closures under the pretext of "protecting the food stocks" for the Southern Resident Killer Whales. However, numerous studies have demonstrated ample availability of Chinook Salmon, their primary food source, with stocks greatly exceeding levels necessary for these whales to thrive. Additionally, reports indicate that the elimination of the Recreational Fishery would yield a marginal increase of less than 1% in Chinook abundance. The proposal to institute further closures for the year 2024 appears increasingly untenable, particularly considering recent stock assessments revealing robust Chinook populations. Notably, data from 2023 shows thriving numbers, such as Fraser Summer 4.1 Chinook at 627,000 (exceeding the DFO target of 120,300 by more than fivefold), Lower Fraser Fall Run Chinook at 150,000 (nearly double the DFO target), and Cowichan River Chinook at 21,000 (more than three times the DFO target).

If the genuine interest is indeed the protection of the Southern Resident Killer Whales, then the DFO should prioritize addressing the many environmental factors truly impacting these whales. These include pollutants from road runoff, discharges from water treatment facilities, pinniped population growth, and the massive freighter vessels traveling directly through these same waters to the Port of Vancouver. While solutions to these concerns may be more complex, all scientific data points to their significant detrimental impact. However, the DFO has opted to divert attention to recreational fishing in small rural communities - a simpler and more passive

Target, a target lacking a unified voice. That era has passed. The absurdity of these newly proposed regulations and their punitive nature towards numerous small communities has compelled us to unify our voices and organize our actions. The time for tolerating this situation has come to an end. We will no longer endure this prolonged struggle and the unjust, ill-informed, and punitive regulations being imposed upon us. It is simply unacceptable for a government agency to persist in disregarding the livelihoods of small businesses, undermining families, and destabilizing coastal communities across British Columbia. The DFO must recognize the gravity of their decisions and put an immediate halt to any further discussions of closures in this area. Minister Lebouthillier, we urge you to take decisive action to safeguard our livelihoods and communities. The time for action is now. What we are advocating for are well-informed regulations that not only protect endangered species but also preserve endangered communities.

Thriving Orcas, Thriving Oceans, and Thriving Communities That is what we all want, for many generations to come.

Yours sincerely, Chris Tucker, President - Port Renfrew Chamber of Commerce

- A. Richards



WARREN'S MARKET UPDATE



In February, the Cowichan Valley market was quite busy!
With 45% more sales than the previous February and 121% higher month-over-month, it feels like Spring is in the air with many buyers coming out of hibernation. While much media attention has been on interest rates and a hoped-for reduction from the Bank of Canada, some financial institutions are offering significantly lower rates compared to last fall.

Give me a call and let's put together a game-plan!

RE/MAX ISLAND PROPERTIES

COWICHAN VALLEY MARKET STATISTICS - FEBRUARY 2024

SINGLE FAMILY DETACHED

AVERAGE SALE PRICE

FEBRUARY 2023: $761,080
FEBRUARY 2024: $805,578 ↑

NUMBER OF SALES

FEBRUARY 2023: 35
FEBRUARY 2024: 51 ↑

DAYS ON THE MARKET

FEBRUARY 2023: 65
FEBRUARY 2024: 55 ↓

SOURCE: VIREB MARKET STATISTICS 2024 | 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!

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