THE WESTWARD INDEPENDENT

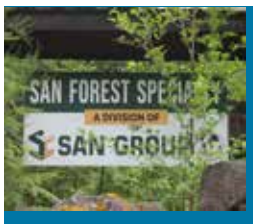
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ISSUE 13



$47 MILLION DOLLARS
A transportation plan favouring bicycles?

Page 5



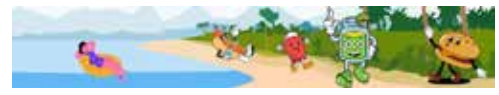
PORT ALBERNI HUMAN TRAFFICKING
Salvation Army steps in to assist

Page 11



CVRD's Dealings
Questionable relationships with NGOs.

Page 17





MID-LEVEL VIOLENCE: THE PROVOCATEUR
ARE RECENT CONTROVERSIAL PROTESTS FOLLOWING A SCRIPT?

Page 6

CVRD'S SECRET DATA MINING FOR UNITED NATIONS REVEALED

CVRD CAUGHT SHARING YOUR DATA WITH GLOBAL ELITES

After weeks of waiting for a reply from CVRD staff about their membership in ICLEI (International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives), we finally received a response:

"Good morning, Our sincere apologies for the significant delay in responding to your inquiry. Unfortunately, your email was incorrectly routed internally and remained unactioned. I can confirm that the CVRD is indeed a member of the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives, and our current accounting records indicate the CVRD has been an annual paid member consistently since 2014. Membership fees are calculated in foreign currency, so the yearly exchange may fluctuate, but on average, the annual membership fee has been approximately $1385 Canadian".

Why does it matter? Similar to North Cowichan's membership in the PCP (Partners for Climate Action), they must report on local climate initiatives



CVRD Building - WWIND Photo

to influence their rankings and policy feedback. These groups collect data from local reports, effectively steering local policies more than local input would. The World Economic Forum and United Nations aim to map and monitor all water, land, and living things by 2030, requiring extensive data collection. We see things like water metering, animal registries, and local governments hiring "mapping consultants." For instance, websites like Our World in Data, funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the WHO, (World Health Organization), collect data from all over the world around health and resources for a global database.

Data is big business, the new 'oil.' The CVRD is a member of ICLEI, which partners with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM). The FCM provides grants, such as the Green Municipal Fund, which requires adherence to climate policies. ICLEI, formed at the UN in 1990, helps local governments meet sustainability goals, with members steering the direction of their work and " influencing local policies". Data harvesting concerns include extensive data collection on energy use, transportation, waste management, water use, and air quality. This data is stored centrally, raising privacy concerns and potential exploitation by third parties. Local governments may not control their data once shared with ICLEI, the PCP and other organizations..

ICLEI influences local policy through guidelines and frameworks, potentially overriding local preferences. Membership includes a commitment to climate protection, leading to specific policies that may conflict with local priorities. Local governments might feel pressured to adopt ICLEI's recommendations, constraining policy choices to align with ICLEI's mission. If you've wondered why local governments have similar Climate Action policies and Transportation plans, it's because they are part of global organizations pushing global goals. But, as North Cowichan's Mayor stated: "If your goal for us is to totally abandon these initiatives, then I would suggest your best option is to elect a different council in a different election."

INTRODUCING DR. MARTIN BARKER



Hello Cowichan Malahat Langford. I am Martin Barker and I am planning on being your Conservative candidate in the riding for the next Federal election.

I have lived here since 1993, been a Duncan City Councillor, have been a long-time conservative activist sitting on the Board for many years in all positions. I was the Conservative candidate in 2015, the fateful year our country shifted towards high deficits, lower standards of living, poor quality healthcare, out of control addiction in our streets, revolving door criminals, incompetence and regular scandals. I am a father of one. You've probably seen my letters to the editor. Some of you have felt first hand the passion I have for our region as a volunteer and activist. I tried to step away from politics, it is an ugly career choice. But if you're like me, you're worried about where our country is heading. I feel compelled to step forward.

I'm more fortunate than most, when my house, like many on my street, became a target for vandals and thieves I sold and moved, many can't. My neighbourhood became a thorough fair for the ever-growing masses of addicted homeless. I can still afford food, although I still feel a big bite at the till; many are struggling to provide food for their families. Like many, my lived experience tells me I am doing much worse under NDP-Liberal leadership. I have a good job, and I struggle to get ahead. I know I am not alone in worrying about the future for my child and my future grandchildren.

I am looking for support in the nomination race for the federal Conservative party. I want to be the common sense representative of our riding. You can support me by buying a conservative membership and attending the nomination meeting (date unknown), follow me on my social media, donating to our local Conservative EDA (so we can afford a good election fight next year) and to me if you support my nomination.

Let me fight for you in Ottawa, we know the NDP hasn't and we know the Liberals wont. Support me as your voice of reason in Ottawa. I will fight for our riding.

Martin Barker

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THE BACKWARD MARCH TOWARD AN ELECTRIC FUTURE: BC'S POWER INFRASTRUCTURE DILEMMA

British Columbia (BC) is grappling with an outdated energy plan that has experts and former officials ringing alarm bells.

Barry Penner, a former BC Minister of Environment, Aboriginal Relations, and Attorney General, now chair of the Energy Futures Institute, has spoken on the pressing need for a revamped energy strategy. According to Penner, the province's reliance on imported electricity, especially during peak times, is a significant vulnerability that needs urgent attention.

Penner's concerns come amidst reports that BC Hydro has imported more than twice as much electricity this year compared to the same period last year. Last year's net electricity imports reached record levels, accounting for one-fifth of the province's domestic electricity demand. This dependency is particularly troubling given the North American Electric Reliability Corporation's (NERC) 2024 summer report, which highlighted potential reserve shortages during above-normal demand and low hydro output scenarios.

The challenges facing BC's power infrastructure are multifaceted. The NERC report noted operational challenges due to drought, wildfires, and rapid electrification across various sectors. While BC is expected to meet energy demands under most conditions, peak load and outage situations could necessitate consumption reduction measures similar to energy alerts recently issued in Alberta.

In January, the Alberta Electric System Operator issued an alert urging residents to reduce electricity usage to essentials to prevent rotating outages. This was a direct result of extreme cold, high demand, and low imports, exemplifying the risks of over-reliance on neighboring power grids. As Penner rightly points out, depending on external assistance during widespread heat events is fraught with risk, as neighboring regions may face their own shortages.

With North Cowichan's electric ambitions for our future, this seems like a case of putting the cart before the horse. Amidst these broader provincial challenges, towns like North Cowichan have set ambitious goals to be fully electric by 2050, with plans to implement changes even before the necessary infrastructure is in place. This approach can be seen as backwards and unrealistic, highlighting a disconnect between aspirational targets and the practical realities of the current energy landscape.

North Cowichan's push towards an all-electric future is commendable if its true intent is in the notion that doing so will combat climate change. However, it fails to account for the province's existing power supply limitations and the risks associated with relying on a single energy source. If climate change, as they are saying, is to bring about more frequent and severe weather fluctuations, the wisdom of relying solely on electricity, particularly when BC's grid is already strained, becomes questionable.

The drive towards electrification is rooted in the desire to reduce carbon emissions, but the execution requires a robust and reliable infrastructure. BC's current model, heavily dependent on imports and vulnerable to operational challenges, does not inspire confidence. The province's peak electrical demand has surged by 7.4% in the past year, more than half of the maximum output of the still unfinished Site C dam. This increase proves the urgent need for a diversified and resilient energy strategy.

Relying exclusively on electricity, especially in a province with such pronounced infrastructure challenges, is a gamble and BC's journey towards an all-electric future, as exemplified by towns like North Cowichan, is fraught with challenges. The province's current power infrastructure is ill-prepared for the rapid electrification push, raising questions about the feasibility and prudence of such goals, and such rapid implementation of these goals by small towns such as North Cowichan.

$47 MILLION DOLLAR MASTER TRANSPORTATION PLAN FOR NORTH COWICHAN

On June 4th North Cowichan passed its Master Transportation plan.

The North Cowichan Master Transportation Plan outlines several priorities and demographic details: Demographic Summary: Population: 31,990 (2021), a 50% increase since 1991. WATT consulting suggests there could be a growth potential with a full build-out that could accommodate 25,355 additional residential units, potentially raising the population to over 90,000, a DRASTIC difference from the projected growth of approx. 35k by 2050.

Age Distribution: The median age is 51.2 years. The largest groups are ages 60-64 and 65-69, making up a significant portion of the population. Projections indicate a 230% increase in those aged 85 and older, while the rest of the population grows by less than 50%, which does not seem to bode as well for the massive 'active' infrastructure they have planned.

Transportation Priorities: Short-Term Intersection and Active Transportation Improvements: Focus on urban areas with existing sidewalks and implementing quick-build materials like concrete curbs and planters and bike lanes with barriers. Some areas such as Berkey's hold priority infrastructure 'improvements' such as a bike lane along Sherman, and a roundabout at Sherman and Lane. The Master Transportation Plan includes a project to implement bi-directional protected bike lanes on James Street, from Duncan Street to the Trans-Canada Highway. The plan notes that this will involve the removal of 10 on-street parking spaces and re-striping the road to create a protected cycling facility.

Cost: Estimated at $47.06 million over 10 years, approximately $4.71 million per year.

Mode Share and Travel Data: Current Travel Patterns: 88% of trips are by automobile, with high car dependency compared to similar communities. The average trip distance is 11.24 km. Berkey's Corner, Chemainus, and Lakes have shorter trip distances, while Bell McKinnon has the highest percentage of auto drivers.

Community Context: Geographic Diversity: North Cowichan is a large, diverse community with distinct sub-areas, which poses challenges for universal transportation solutions.

Household Travel Survey: Conducted in 2021, providing data on travel patterns and mode share, which inform transportation planning.

Concerns: The plan may not cater equally to all demographics, especially the aging population, and areas with limited amenities and sustainable transportation infrastructure, like Bell McKinnon, might face challenges. The switching of infrastructure priorities from roads to bike lanes will become a frustration for 88% of commuters and people unable to just hop on a bike. Road 'improvements' such as the Canada Ave. one will further frustrate drivers (as it is meant to) and increase frustration to first responders as cars can not move over, and even more so if there are barriers between the bike lanes.



IGNORED AND OVERLOOKED: THE CRISIS OF YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH FUNDING

It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men. — Frederick Douglass

"Healthy emotional and social development in our early years lays the foundation for mental health and resilience throughout the lifespan. Yet, 70 percent of persons living with a mental illness see their symptoms begin before age 18. Mental illness affects some 1.2 million of our children and youth. By age 25, that number rises to 7.5 million (about one in five Canadians)." — Mental Health Commission of Canada

The alarming lack of resources for youth mental health and addictions on the island is a critical issue. Despite the urgent need for support, it seems those controlling the youth mental health budget have not prioritized helping children before they become adults who may struggle and become burdens on the community. The anger and sadness directed towards addicts and criminals often forget that this behaviour stems from unresolved childhood trauma. Every person struggling on the streets was once a hopeful child, and many were failed by the system meant to support them.

Youth today face multiple sources of trauma, including the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, overwhelming doomsday predictions from adults about climate change and wars, and the pervasive influence of social media.

The province's priorities need to be more balanced. A local youth mental health center was recently denied funding for its programs, and a youth addiction program in Nanaimo was just shut down. Island Health seems focused on a new Indigenous-only youth rehab with limited capacity—20 beds, half for short-term detox and the other half for a 10-week treatment program. The province is investing $7.1 million initially, with an additional $1 million from Island Health, part of a broader $171 million investment in Indigenous-led treatment services. While this is commendable, it leaves a significant gap in services for non-Indigenous youth.

Island Health's recent grants for youth resilience, aimed at improving mental well-being and mitigating drug-related harms, have not effectively addressed the acute mental health and addiction needs in the Valley. The recipients of these grants include organizations focused on general resilience and harm reduction, but none directly target intensive mental health or addiction treatment for youth. These include: "AVI Health & Community Services – RYHME (Resilience and Harm Reduction); Cedar Community Secondary School - Uy'shqwaluwan; Clements Centre for Families – Workplace Resilience for Supported Independent Living Program; Cowichan Tribes – Tutleen'utul for Safety; Literacy Central Vancouver Island – Trade Skills Literacy Connect; Narwell Services Society – Wellness Tools in Trades: Health Promotion Resiliency Program; Nourish Cowichan – Nourish Cowichan Food Equity Ambassador: Building Youth Resiliency through Peer-to-Peer Supports; Nuu-chah-nulth Youth Warrior Family Society – Diving for Resilience; Pacific Rim School District - hišukiš cawaak: Everything is One; Qualicum School District – Braveheart; Town of Ladysmith – YOUth Bloom

Cowichan Family Life (CFL), a longstanding provider of affordable counselling since 1985, has seen a 70% increase in clientele but has been denied multiple grants. CFL applied for a grant from Duncan after the city received up to $100,000 for its COVID-19 recovery grant program as CFL were seeing a large increase in mental health needs in the valley during this time but was turned down. CFL has approached other local governments but has been told that mental health is a provincial jurisdiction. Despite a 54% referral rate from local ministries, CFL does not receive sufficient funding from Island Health and lacks highly trained therapists for severe mental health issues that are often sent their way. Similarly, the local hospice is receiving referrals for complex grief issues, such as those resulting from suicide and overdose, outside their typical scope and without extra funding. CFL's grant applications to local municipalities, Gaming grants and the United Way have been repeatedly denied, forcing them to consider closing and reorganizing.

United Way, with substantial assets and considerable remuneration for employees, (which holds assets of 121,718,526, (with 5,342,082 in foreign investment funds) and who, for the year ended March 31, 2024, paid total remuneration of $10,615,920 to 106 contractors and employees) allocated funds to various community organizations in the Mid-Island area, but none directly supported youth mental health or addiction treatment. Notable recipients included hobbyist associations, spiritual centers, and agricultural societies, leaving essential services like CFL struggling.

The closure of Big Brothers and Big Sisters of the Valley further exacerbates the lack of resources for youth. This organization has long provided essential mentorship and support for young people, and its absence leaves a significant void in the community's support network. From their press release: "Duncan, British Columbia – [June 26, 2024] – The Board of Directors of Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Cowichan Valley (BBBSCV) has made the difficult decision to commence the process of dissolution and closure, after operating since 1972. The effective date is yet to be determined. It is anticipated to occur within the next few months, pending compliance with the Societies Act. BBBSCV has been coordinating with Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada to minimize the disruption to the families and children who rely on this critical service. Like many not-for-profit organizations across Canada, and throughout the Cowichan Valley, fundraising activities are not yielding sufficient funds to meet the operating costs of the agency. In addition, BBBSCV has been dependent on grants provided by the government and private granting organizations; these grants have become fewer and much harder to achieve. Without strong, stable alternative revenue streams to support core programming, this leaves the agency not being able to meet the demands of increasing operating costs (staff wages, rent, insurance, etc.)."

Island Health's Discovery program, which offers counselling for youth with addiction, has only one counsellor for the mid-Island area, who is currently on leave with no replacement

One woman told us her daughter was suffering from severe mental health issues and when she brought her to the Cowichan District Hospital she was told point-blank, "You will not get the help you need here as there is not a child psychologist and you must drive her to Victoria".

No inpatient youth rehabs exist on the island, (besides the new Orca Centre) making it difficult for low-income families to access far-away facilities on the mainland, which have long waitlists.

Critics argue that B.C.'s 2023 budget for mental health and addictions lacks transparency and fails to address key issues, particularly for youth. The $ 1 billion investment favours treatment over harm reduction. Nicole Luongo from the Canadian Drug Policy Coalition points out that the budget does little to address the toxic drug crisis and creates a hierarchical system with user fees for some treatment beds. Despite promises of enhanced prevention and intervention services for children, there is skepticism about their implementation and success measurement, given the investment accounts for only 190 new treatment beds which look to be for adults only at this point. Critics, including B.C. Liberal leader Kevin Falcon, called for more transparency and accountability, questioning where these funds are truly being distributed amid the decline in youth services.

The system is broken, and it would seem investing in our youth to a much greater extent would be one tool to help slow down the current growing crises we see on the streets and in the community.

- A. Richards

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MEN'S MENTAL HEALTH MONTH: SILENCED CRISES AMIDST THE NOISE

With June being Men's Mental Health Month, we look to highlight the severe crises that do not seem to get much airtime or exposure on mainstream news.

'US stats: n 2022, men died by suicide 3.85 times more than women. White males accounted for 68.46% of suicide deaths in 2022.'

Canadian-born Population: Overlooked and Under Strain: A nuanced aspect of the mental health landscape involves Canadian-born individuals, often of European descent. This group is frequently excluded from BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour) initiatives and labelled as colonizers from a young age in schools. They are often told they are the one group not allowed to complain, adding a layer of mental health strain. A study published in PubMed examined suicide mortality rates and trends in Canada, revealing that Canadian-born males have higher age-standardized mortality rates (ASMR) than first-generation immigrant males. Additionally, three times as many Canadian-born men as women commit suicide, highlighting the unique mental health challenges faced by this demographic.

Opioid Crisis: A Disproportionate Toll: The opioid crisis and mental health challenges continue to ravage Canada, hitting certain groups harder than others. Regions such as British Columbia (B.C.), Alberta, the Northwest Territories, and the Yukon have been particularly affected. The opioid crisis has disproportionately impacted First Nations communities. In Alberta and B.C., First Nations individuals are up to five times more likely to experience an opioid-related overdose and three times more likely to die from it compared to non-First Nations individuals. However, data limitations hinder our full understanding of the crisis, especially regarding unintentional versus intentional overdoses. Many opioid-related deaths classified as accidental might actually be suicides, underestimated due to the reliance on human judgment to determine intent.

Employment and Men's Mental Health: Work conditions play a crucial role in men's mental health. Research indicates that men who report low job control, job insecurity, and unfair pay are more likely to experience suicidal thoughts. For many men, employment is not just a job but a source of identity, structure, and purpose. When faced with unemployment or unfulfilling work, this sense of identity and worth can erode, increasing the risk of depression and suicide.

Homelessness: A Critical Risk Factor: Homelessness and precarious housing are significant risk factors for suicidality. A recent meta-analysis reported that among people experiencing homelessness, 17.8% had current suicidal ideation, with 41.6% having experienced it at some point in their lives. Similarly, 9.2% had attempted suicide recently, with 28.8% having done so at some point. In Toronto, a review of coroner records revealed that 60 of the 3,319 suicide deaths between 1998 and 2012 involved homeless individuals, with men constituting 83% of these deaths. The instability and insecurity of temporary homelessness further exacerbate these risks.

Military Personnel and Manual Laborers at High Risk: Mental health challenges are also prevalent among military personnel and certain occupational groups. Military personnel are 1.3 to 1.7 times more likely to report suicidal thoughts and plans compared to civilians. Similarly, men in manual labour sectors, such as construction and farming, face high suicide rates due to economic uncertainty, mental health stigma, social isolation, increased alcohol consumption, and poor working conditions.

COVID-19 Pandemic: Amplifying Mental Health Issues: The COVID-19 pandemic has further strained mental health across the country. National surveys reveal that job loss and financial worries have led to a deterioration in mental health and increased binge drinking. As of April 2020, 14.6% of men had lost their jobs, with a higher proportion of these losses being full-time positions compared to women. The public health measures, including stay-at-home orders and business closures, significantly reduced social integration, increasing feelings of isolation, loneliness, and relationship breakdowns—key risk factors for suicide.

Sources: "Mental Health Commission of Canada, various studies on mental health and suicidality and Canadian suicide mortality rates" and: "First-generation immigrants versus Canadian-born: J Strachan 1, H Johansen, C Nair, M Nargundkar; PMID: 1713798

Resources to help men in your life

Local: Cowichan Lodge Tertiary Mental Health Facility: This facility provides care for individuals experiencing severe and hard-to-treat mental health and neurocognitive challenges. They have an adult unit (27-bed) and a seniors unit (24-bed) managed by Island Health's Mental Health and Substance Use program.

Cowichan Valley Mental Health & Substance Use: The Rapid Access Clinic (RAC) in Duncan offers a walk-in clinic for adults, providing one crisis counselling session with a mental health and substance use clinician (non-psychiatry) and information and referrals for connecting with the most appropriate service.

The Sheds - Cowichan Brain Injury Society: This organization champions the Men's Shed movement, promoting camaraderie, creativity, and inclusivity among men and women. They provide a safe space for men to share experiences and connect with others.

Global: https://www.buddyup.ca - Buddy Up is a men's suicide prevention communications campaign: a call to action to men, by men.;

https://headsupguys.org/ - The World's leading men's mental health resource.

https://mantherapy.org/ - "What began as a suicide prevention campaign has morphed into a men's mental health campaign where the goal is to support all men before they are ever in crisis" - The testimonial page has pages and pages of amazing videos from men touching on topics from addiction to bipolar.



MID-LEVEL VIOLENCE: THE PROVOCATEUR

What is Mid-Level Violence? It sounds like a strange term. Violence is violence, right? Someone initiates contact without consent. A punch, a shove, some kind of an attack where there is no consent for physical contact. Where is the line that gets crossed that takes an exchange from a heated argument to an assault?

If you're walking down the sidewalk and someone comes up to you and shoves you or strikes you, that is an assault and it comes with criminal charges. What if someone is yelling at you? Is that an assault? Mid-level violence is a label for a phenomenon that has become a regular occurrence at certain protests and counter-protests in our world of late (not to suggest it's an entirely new thing). In the world of protest, Mid-Level Violence is by all accounts, a tactic. It's the behaviour of "the provocateur". The tactic is to employ behaviour (s) that will provoke your opponent to lose their cool and do one of two things: 1) Be the first one to make physical contact without consent and thus be the initiator of violence and as such become subject to charges of assault. 2) Give up and walk away, losing respect for themselves having failed to find a way to give voice to their side of the argument.

There are a couple of great examples from recent protests on Vancouver Island. The first one took place on September 20, 2023, at the Legislative Grounds in Victoria, BC. There was a Cross Canada peaceful assembly and march organized in support of parental guardianship called the One Million March For Children. A PA system was set up and there were several hundred people in attendance to hear the speakers present their views that parents should be included in discussions with school teachers and administrators if their children were choosing new names and/or pronouns when the current reality is that children were being affirmed in these choices without parental consent or even notice from the school. So that was the basis for the assembly. There was a much larger group of people who attended this assembly as a "counter-protest". They were there to express views in opposition. What happened is that the moment the organizers turned on the PA system and the first speaker began to address the crowd, the "counter-protestors" began to shout slogans and drown out the speaker. The slogans were provocative and it could be said, a misrepresentation of the parents and grandparents who had come to hear the speakers. The chants were such as "Transphobes Go Home" and "F**k You Fascists". This is mid-level violence on a group scale. There was no space for a dialogue and free and political speech was being silenced. The opportunity for the organizers of the assembly and attendees to make use of the public space in a free and democratic society was being silenced and shut down. The video is available. There's plenty of content to view and make your own assessment of what occurred and whatever side of the argument you are on is not important. All views are welcome. Dialogue around the issue needs to happen. The point here is that it was a "shout down". Open dialogue and free expression were being cancelled by the louder voice.

Imagine you are discussing something with someone and it becomes clear you are on opposite sides of an issue. You have something you want to share and perhaps they do as well but instead of being able to share your views openly, the person you are "discussing" things with gets quite close to your face, say about twelve inches or so, and starts shouting "SHUT UP SHUT UP SHUT UP" as loud as they can... and that's their side of the argument. What are you going to do? They won't stop shouting. Your voice cannot be heard by them or by you. That's a provocateur. That's Mid-Level Violence. Not technically an assault perhaps but it does tend to end the conversation. So in Victoria, that was the behaviour that ended the event. The police eventually demanded that the PA system be shut off because things were getting dangerous. Counter-protestors were getting past the police into the stage area. A police officer was assaulted by one of the counter-protesters. She punched him in the face. It would seem they were willing to do whatever it would take to stop the event from continuing.

Another example is this one in Vancouver: a man wearing a billboard attended a Pride event last year. His billboard read something like "Children cannot give informed consent". When he got close to the event he was immediately surrounded by people shouting obscenities at him. After a time he tried to move away. They followed him. Again he moved and was followed again. He kept his cool even though he was completely surrounded by people swearing at him non-stop at the top of their lungs. F**k You F**k You F**k You was the chant from a large man right in his face. After several minutes of this, the man with the billboard turned his head to see what was going on behind him and he put his hand up as he did so. His hand brushed lightly against the person screaming in his face and at that moment, the man shouting F-You punched him, knocking him down and jumped on top of him. At this point, the police stepped in. Why not sooner? Well, that's because what they were doing, while highly provocative is not technically considered assault.

Finally, I'd like to give the example of a recent event in Cowichan. There was an event held at the Cowichan Community Centre called Vancouver Island Speaks: "Pushing Pride - When Activism Conflicts with Women's Rights, Gay Rights, and the Safeguarding of Kids". The content of the full presentation is available online at https://tinyurl.com/TWAFJune8 for those interested in learning more about what was being presented. A local organization called Revolve Cowichan organized a protest against the event which was scheduled to take place during the time that attendees would be arriving. I attended the protest in the capacity of a reporter/the press to see if I could ask the attendees of the protest some questions to better understand their views and get that side of the story as well. I was basically harassed. There were two or three individuals who followed me the whole time and the moment I would attempt to engage in an interview/conversation with an attendee, one or more of the people following me would get in between me and my subject and put signs in front of my camera and start screaming in close proximity to block any attempt to engage. They would not stop until I'd moved on. This happened many times. Every time. I had one exchange with an individual on roller skates who approached me seeing I had a camera and was recording and asked me "Are you a friendly?". I said "I'm independent media". He asked the name of my channel and when I disclosed it he said "Oh you're ..." and turned to leave but before he did, he quickly reached out and tapped me on the arm. I know that seems small but think for a second. There's no way that in that environment of open hostility, I would reach out and touch ANYONE. Touch without consent. That's when people say "Don't touch me or I'll charge you with assault". So in my opinion he did that deliberately to provoke me. A subtle tactic. I wasn't the only reporter there. The team from The Westward Independent was also there in the capacity of the press and their experiences were similar and worse. They had people backing into them deliberately (as if they didn't see them) and then saying "Don't touch me". Do you see?

Mid-Level Violence is a tactical technique and there are many variations. Shouting to drown out. Close proximity with threatening expressions or wearing masks to hide identity. Shouting obscenities. Finding ways to make physical contact and immediately claiming that it was the other person who made contact. Using props like signs and umbrellas to make physical contact while feigning innocence. Above all, preventing open dialogue.

So one more time, the goal is to stop a conversation, silence free speech and most importantly, make the other person look like the aggressor ...and failing that, by silencing the other person's ability to express their views peacefully, making them FEEL DIMINISHED so they come to believe they have no recourse, no way to be heard, NO VOICE. Mid-level violence is a form of harassment. I can't say that there is legal recourse because so far the police have done nothing and it would seem that their hands are tied. They know what's going on though. Perhaps if enough of this behaviour can be documented and presented to the Police as evidence, the pattern will be acknowledged enabling the police to respond. Here are a couple of examples of what constitutes harassment: Repeatedly following a person. Engaging in threatening behaviour. Communicating with a person or anyone known to them in a manner that causes them to fear for their safety

So to wrap this up, I'd just like to say that in a free and democratic society, all sides have the right to voice their opinions and views and employing tactical strategies like Mid-Level Violence and Provocation to silence views is unlikely to lead to a good outcome for anyone. Difficult issues need to be discussed fairly. Through open dialogue, mis-information and dis-information can be identified and weeded out of the conversation creating the possibility of building bridges and finding the common ground. For that to happen, Mid-Level Violence needs to be seen for what it is: Harassment.

Sincerely, Storm Ryder News



SOMEONE'S ALWAYS WATCHING...

IT'S US, WE'RE WATCHING.

Duncan:

June 3

CAO: "Staff are reviewing the timing of the scramble crosswalk" Canada – Ingram Scramble Crossing Replacement with Protected Southbound Left Turn Signal. That Council direct staff to amend the Financial Plan to re-allocate the following budget amounts and provide an overall project budget of $31,000 for the Canada/Ingram Intersection Safety Project (including contingency) Re-allocate $20,000 from Canada Ave / Gov't Street Traffic Signals Re-allocate $3,000 from Traffic Calming (2024 Financial Plan) To create a protected, dedicated, only left turn lane heading south only allows movement on a new left turn signal light. Cllr Capps brought forward a motion to extend to include summer data from the scramble crosswalk. Cllr Bruce suggested the issues are vehicle issues and not pedestrian. Cllr. Duncan stated the majority of frustration is from drivers, but they need not be going through Duncan as we have a bypass called the highway, Motion to extend passed (Cllr Bruce and McKinlay opposed)

North Cowichan:

June 4th

Adoption of the Master Transportation Plan from WATT consulting (see summary in paper). Around 50 people attended the last open house and online interactions were not statistically relevant.

Manhas "I think this is a very aspirational plan" [and not likely] "The bike lane on Sherman Rd would cause chaos". 'Adding costs to builders will create more unaffordability".

Istace: "I have biked to all NC and CVRD meetings for the last 7 weeks and want the same equity as drivers". "Possibly a tour of Saanich we are not saying we are taking away people's ability to drive". " owning cars costs $1400 a month an e-bike is $2000". " we should lower village cores to 30km/h.

Findlay: "How are we going to fund the active transportation plan that depends on builder's dollars if they are outside the Urban Containment Boundaries?" Asked to postpone adoption.

Mayor Douglas - against a bypass, asked for it to be removed from the MTP.

Motion passed (Findlay and Caljouw opposed)

June 11th

Permissive tax exemptions bylaw for non-profits and charities. Amendments were debated over and passed back to staff for the June 19th meeting. (All in favour)

June 19th: To present the draft Climate Adaptation Strategy for feedback and seek direction on the next steps before presenting to the Council for adoption. A presentation by staff and Urban Systems Ltd. will be provided. Recommendation: THAT Council direct staff to: Forward the draft report to the Environmental Advisory Committee and Agricultural Advisory Committees for feedback, and

Consider revisions based on feedback received and bring forward the report to a future Council meeting for consideration of adoption. A grant from UBCM for the draft to reduce "vulnerabilities". Cllr.Manhas "Have you come up with a cost for this?" - Answer: It would be tough to assign a cost. " You spoke of flooding, but we used to do an annual debris removal that would lower the flooding, do you agree with this" - Answer. "That answer is quite a technical one". Cllr. Findlay: " I have 4.5 pages of notes. The notes say we are putting everything through a climate lens which I find scary as only 5% of people claimed climate was their most important issue". " There is a lot in our report that refers to the IPCC, and not taking into consideration the sun". "The forecasts we see from the IPCC are computer models, so if the inputs are wrong, the results are wrong". (Motion passed Cllr. Findlay and Manhas opposed)

BILL 44: THE NDP'S AUTHORITARIAN DENSIFICATION OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

At the end of June, B.C. NDP Bill 44 will come into effect, abolishing single-family zoning in all municipalities with more than 5,000 residents. City councils will be mandated to permit three to four housing units - in the form of secondary suites, laneway houses, townhomes, triplexes, and house-plexes – on residential single-family lots.

This dramatic densification will be accomplished through a significant seizure of zoning power from local communities. Towns with more than 5,000 residents will be forced to rewrite their community housing plans to follow a "policy manual" drawn up by the NDP. Rezonings conforming to these new housing plans – which will merely be local extensions of the NDP policy manual written in Victoria - will be automatically approved. This even extends to mixed-use developments where just 50% of the project is actually devoted to housing.

Public rezoning hearings will be prohibited outright - a boon to developers, but a major loss for local democracy. Residents concerned about the effect that a new rezoning measure will have on a particular neighbourhood's infrastructure, traffic flow, or community character will be deprived of any way to express their opinion. Local governments will lose the power to tailor zoning to the particular character, culture, economy, history, and environment of their community. The province's constellation of varied towns will be subject to a single zoning manual written by the NDP government.

This is the single-largest transfer of power from local communities to the provincial government in Victoria since B.C. entered Confederation in 1871.

Richmond Mayor Malcolm Brodie pointed out that replacing public hearings with automatic rezonings will mean the scrapping of traffic studies: "Are we going to assume that traffic will take care of itself?". He also expressed worry over how municipalities would cope with the increased strain on infrastructure, water supply, and public services.

The NDP government is taking this dramatic measure because it wants to make housing affordable without confronting the root cause of B.C.'s housing crisis: immigration-driven population growth. What will abolishing single-family zoning and scrapping public hearings accomplish? According to the NDP government's figures, 130,000 new housing units will be built as a result of Bill 44, in ten years.

From 2021 to 2022 alone, B.C. had a net international migration rate of 103,674. The number of units created as a result of Bill 44 will do very little to offset the need for new housing created by our province's booming population. If unsustainable immigration-driven population growth continues, the need for new housing will keep rising, and future B.C. governments will likely enact ever more drastic measures to build ever more housing. Upwards, like the skyscrapers of Toronto or Hong Kong, or outwards, like the urban sprawl of Calgary. Probably both.



But how many people should really live in B.C.? Pre-contact population estimates range from 200,000 to a million. In 1941, the population was 817,861. In 1981, 2.74 million. In 2001, 3.9 million. Today, more than 5 million. Tomorrow? Canada's taboo around immigration prevents British Columbians from discussing whether there should be a limiting principle to provincial population growth.

Many immigrants come to B.C. because they too love our land of rural agrarian communities, quiet semi-rural suburbs, wide open spaces, abundant nature, and rich farmland. We should strive to treasure and preserve these things as an inheritance for future generations.

Instead of steamrolling community autonomy and mandating development, Premier Eby and the B.C. NDP should pressure the federal government to give our province more control over immigration - as was rightly granted to Quebec under the Canada-Quebec Accord of 1991. This common sense approach would allow B.C. to tie our immigration levels to our housing capacity and labour needs - setting our province on a more sensible and harmonious path that works with communities, not against them.

I encourage concerned citizens to contact their local MLA and demand that they stand up for B.C. communities by opposing Bill 44.

Riley Donovan is a B.C. journalist and editor of the national online publication Dominion Review (dominionreview.ca). You can follow him on Twitter @valdombre

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PROTEST OR HARASSMENT? THE REVOLVE COWICHAN CONTROVERSY

On June 4th, 2023, a local advocacy group called Revolve Cowichan posted an urgent call on their Facebook page, urging supporters to protest an event they labelled as transphobic and homophobic.

The event, titled "Pushing Pride: When Activism Conflicts with Women's Rights, Gay Rights, and the Safeguarding of Kids," was set to take place at the community center.

Revolve Cowichan encouraged their followers to inundate the community center with phone calls and emails, providing staff contact information to apply pressure. Their message was clear: they intended to prevent the event from happening and urged supporters, "If you consider yourself an ally, this is your time to stand up."

The basis for their protest was their belief that the speaker, Meghan Murphy, would likely express transphobic views during her talk scheduled for June 8th. Revolve Cowichan's statement declared, "We cannot support an event that will actively cause harm to transgender and gender non-conforming people." They also called on the community to help stop the event from taking place in "our community safe spaces."

Murphy's event, a donation-based gathering, was held in a private room within the community center. This raises critical questions: Is Revolve Cowichan policing speech, or are they asserting that community spaces should only host events they personally endorse?

Is it justifiable to pressure community center staff by bombarding them with calls and emails as advised by the protest documents? Is it fair to attempt to cancel an event that was paid for, organized, and approved by the community center? Should assumptions about potential speech be grounds for preventing someone from speaking? Does every event need unanimous community approval to be hosted in a public space?

Regardless of the event's content, is it ethical to incite community members to harass, intimidate, bully, and shame individuals or groups from exercising their right to free speech and assembly? According to Revolve Cowichan, it appears they believe this approach is justified.

Amid the emotionally charged exchanges on Revolve Cowichan's Facebook post—where one faction supported policing the event while another defended the right to speak—we decided to attend the protest ourselves to gain a firsthand understanding. The online debate was rife with hate, name-calling, slander, and petty bickering from both sides. Supporters of the protest wielded slogans like "No Space for Hate" and "Let Love Win," which stood in stark contrast to the hostility and vitriol evident in their tactics. We aimed to understand why those advocating for love and peace would simultaneously endorse bullying, cancellation, and harassment of another group. This juxtaposition of love and hate prompted us to seek clarity on the mixed messages.

On June 8th, we arrived at the community center to observe the protest setup. The protesters adorned the walls with banners, painted the sidewalk with chalk slogans and quotes, and prepared prebuilt banners, posters, juice boxes, horns, and even bubbles. Among the crowd, we noticed our local MP, Alistair McGregor, seemingly assisting with the setup. When we asked him why he was there, he replied that he was there to support people he loved. However, our presence quickly drew attention.

When our reporter identified himself as being from The Westward Independent, a protester immediately confronted him, attempting to provoke a physical altercation. Despite trying to defuse the situation with laughter and confusion, the tension escalated as a protester aggressively shoved a loud horn in our reporter's face. The situation deteriorated rapidly from there.

Protesters surrounded our reporter, shouting slogans like "We need the noise up here" and "You don't belong here." Kristi Koons, the event organizer and leader of Revolve Cowichan, repeatedly intervened, offering juice to protesters while others used horns, umbrellas, and banners to obstruct media access. The atmosphere became increasingly hostile, with several individuals being stabbed with umbrellas, spat upon, and physically assaulted.



Alistair McGregor - Member of Parliament Cowichan—Malahat—Langford

Despite Revolve Cowichan later issuing a statement claiming it was a peaceful protest, the RCMP received reports of assault and violence. They are currently investigating and reviewing camera footage from the event.

During the event, we encountered friends and several elected officials who appeared confused about its purpose. Some believed it was a fun gathering to celebrate pride and community, while others thought it aimed to shut down and cancel speech they disliked. We later discovered that Revolve Cowichan had posted two events: one calling for the cancellation of Meghan Murphy and another billed as a 'Protest Party' to uplift queer joy and community care. Both events were scheduled for the same time, date, and location.

Was this done deliberately? Were these two events—one promoting bullying, harassment, and cancellation, and the other uplifting joy—set for the same date to confuse the public? Was this an error or a strategic move to gather more support by appealing to both sides? Was it disingenuous? Revolve Cowichan claimed 200 people attended, but our video review counted around 75 individuals. Was this also an error, or an attempt to mislead the public about the support and agenda being promoted?

In the end, despite our attempts to engage with the protesters to understand their motives, the organizers swiftly intervened to prevent any discourse. This seemed intentional, as their original event calling for Meghan Murphy's cancellation stated, "We recommend not engaging with event attendees or police officers." Why the secrecy? Why muzzle the attendees? Why two events?

We contacted Revolve Cowichan for further explanation, but they did not respond by the time of publication. Video of the event, which has reached over 70,000 views across numerous platforms, can be found via coap.ca or x.com/ContactWwind



Revolve Cowichan - Facebook



Protester with obscene gesture at the June 4th event

COMMUNITY TRIUMPH: ENDING HARMFUL AERIAL SPRAYING

West Kelowna - Cranbrook - June 20, 2024 - The West Kelowna Branch of the Kelowna Citizens Safety Association (WKB/KCSA) and Call To Action Cranbrook are pleased to announce that the Gypsy/spongy moth aerial spraying program has concluded. The third and final application of the bacterial pesticide BTK, containing 87% of secret ingredients, was completed this morning. The program completion was announced by the Ministry of Forests this morning.

Jim Shannon from Call to Action Cranbrook stated, "We are glad that this is over and our community can try to recover from this chemical trespass on their person and property. We know of many people who have been hurt by these applications and will continue to document the damage done to our community and encourage legal action against the government."

Lloyd Manchester, President of WKB/KCSA, added, "We are pleased that the aerial spraying of 12 communities is complete and that there will be no spraying of BTK in West Kelowna. We have had reports of harm caused from exposure to this bacterial spray in the other 12 communities and will be following up on them." Manchester also noted, "We expect the Ministry of Forests to return next year, and we are prepared. This application of an unknown formulation of a bacterial pesticide is unacceptable and has to be stopped. We will work diligently with other groups to ensure that the government is not permitted to spray in our communities with no regard for our children, the elderly, the immunocompromised, and others who were exposed to the spray that drifted onto their properties and community."

We would like to thank all those who voiced their opposition to this program. Your efforts made a difference and saved the community from the trauma of aerial spraying. However, we are disappointed with West Kelowna City Council and the Regional District of Central Okanagan for not raising concerns about this issue. It will be noted that all these politicians supported the indiscriminate aerial spraying in their community without considering alternatives or adhering to WorkSafe BC pesticide regulations, We would also like to thank School District #23 for their concerns regarding this spraying and ultimately helping to stop this egregious aerial spray program, stated Manchester

For more information please contact

Lloyd Manchester, President, WKB/KCSA, Phone: 250-878-9352; Website:www.kelownacsa.o rg; Spray Info Line: 1-800-573-0213

THE BUSINESS OF BARTER...

Can businesses thrive and benefit from a bartering system?

Over the last few challenging years I've been part of many conversations about how to establish a local bartering system in the Cowichan Valley.

We've been seeking a system that could support our small businesses and individuals too. I am excited to share with you that there is a Canadian bartering system & it's here in the Cowichan Valley. BarterPay has expanded across Canada & I am proud to announce that I am the new BarterPay Coach here in the Cowichan Valley, representing Vancouver Island north of Mill Bay. I'm so looking forward to fostering and expanding our business community! I love connecting people, seeing people succeed and win in all capacities of their lives. As an entrepreneur myself, I understand what it takes to build and sustain a small business! What I love the most about BarterPay is that it's for absolutely any type of business and it fosters a spirit of community and collaboration among businesses.

What is BarterPay? It's a BUSINESS to BUSINESS Structured bartering system. And it's been working for over 4000 businesses! Here's a simple breakdown on who it's for and how it works.

Have you got extra unsold inventory, seats in your restaurant, unbooked space or time in your calendar? Barter your spare capacity for credits that you can use to get anything your business needs. Whether you have a home-based, retail, hospitality, health care, media, travel or trades business, your unsold inventory, time, services can be offered up at retail value, enabling you to earn Barter Credits (TM) to acquire the products and services you need. Don't spend your cash when you can barter locally and across the nation.

To help build our local bartering economy, John and Debbi Porter, the founders of BarterPay, are coming to the Island and I'll be hosting an information/meet and greet session on Thursday, July 11th at 7pm, at Avalon Farm. (5515 Samuel road, Duncan). Come meet these wonderful humans! Bring a business friend and if you know a registered charity who can use some support, bring them too! John and Debbie love sharing and answering all questions, so don't be shy!

Can't attend? Feel free to contact me at dom.daviau@barterpay.ca or go to BarterPay here https://barterpay.ca/locations/cowichan-valley-027/

I hope you are as excited as I am for this opportunity to grow business and community! I look forward to meeting you soon!

Dom Daviau is the owner of Handy Mum Home Improvement and the Barter Coach for the Cowichan Valley

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YOUR SUBCONSCIOUS IS A GIFT!



Jennifer Kessel, Clinical Hypnotherapist - SmilingHeart.ca

The unknowns of life can be pleasing,

Like selecting a chocolate from an elegant gift box or they can be upsetting and overwhelming causing states like anxiety, depression, addiction and insomnia. Distress is like a negatively charged ion and wellbeing is like a positively charged one. When we bring these into proximity, they powerfully attract each other. Hypnotherapy harnesses the mind's ability to bring about changes that bring the body, mind and spirit into homeostasis, balance and connection. Because we are not meant to live in prolonged states of suffering, the subconscious mind has a primary objective to heal. Hypnotherapy is based on using this ability as well as the other primary objective; to protect. The mind will not reveal anything it's not ready to address, nor will it accept suggestions that go against morals, values and beliefs. A clinician does not control the client in any way. Stage hypnotists don't want you to know this! They are capitalizing on the class clowns, who love to be the centre of attention at any cost. The goal is entertainment, not healing.

Hypnosis is the natural and safe ability of the mind to hyper focus on something. If you've ever driven somewhere and become aware you are farther along than you realized, you my friend have already experienced the natural state of hypnosis. Your mind was simply focusing on something else while you drove because nothing out of the ordinary was happening that you needed to pay attention to. This also happens when we watch a good movie, or read a great book, identify with the characters and storyline, and focus solely on that rather than the fact that our leg has fallen asleep, or the dog needs to go out. Hypnosis happens when the mind enters the theta frequency, which also happens just before sleeping and waking.

Hypnotherapy uses teaching, tools, and techniques to get really clear about the thing you want more of instead of that old thing that's holding you back. Through skilled questions and observation, the clinician draws out the client's own inherent wisdom. The past can then be reframed, and new awarenesses anchored in. Here's the discovery that I want to shout from the rooftops, hypnotherapy is like the legend inside that box of chocolate! It helps identify thoughts, feelings and actions that you want more of. During hypnosis, the abundant of states of wellbeing are nurtured and will begin to manifest.

As clients are empowered with new information about themselves, are shown why and how to make changes in thoughts, emotions, and actions, are given tools to make these shifts, and further reinforce the state of wellbeing in hypnosis, clients will experience more wellbeing simply because that is the focus of their energy. The effects of hypnotherapy continue long after the session is complete, and clients can expect to experience positive changes indefinitely.

Hypnotherapy is a gift

SAN GROUP SCANDAL: MIGRANT WORKERS CLAIM INHUMANE TREATMENT AMIDST LEGAL BATTLE



The San Group, based in Port Alberni, is embroiled in a controversy over the treatment of migrant workers.

Reports surfaced that approximately 15 workers, under contract with the San Group, were living in substandard conditions in a trailer until they were moved out by the Salvation Army's anti-human trafficking unit on June 29. The company has denied allegations of human trafficking and poor living conditions, blaming the workers for trying to break their Temporary Foreign Workers Visas to stay in Canada.

Bob Bortolin, a senior compliance officer with the San Group, dismissed the allegations as a fabrication and described the situation as a labor dispute that has escalated. He stated, "We paid for overtime, we paid for statutory holidays, so that's why it hurts right now to have these accusations put forward to us."

However, Kim Tran, an advocate for the workers, described their living conditions as deplorable, claiming they were "not treated right by the company" and lived in a "rotten trailer" with inadequate facilities.

Further complicating the matter, the San Group has announced the arrival of nine new Vietnamese Temporary Foreign Workers but assured they will not stay in the controversial trailer.

The company is also conducting its own investigation to determine if a third party misled the workers about their employment conditions.

Amidst this turmoil, the San Group is planning to sue the City of Port Alberni, alleging damage to its reputation and unfair treatment during a surprise inspection, which the company claims was unauthorized and illegal. Surveillance videos released by the San Group purportedly show the inspection, adding another layer of complexity to this ongoing issue.

Port Alberni Mayor Sharie Minions and MP Gord Johns have acknowledged the situation, with Johns stating his office is doing everything possible to assist and has alerted the federal Minister of Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship about the complaints.

- Staff



Dear WWIND,

I have read several articles in mainstream news that the Federal Government and now our BC Provincial Government are making glorious press releases about legislating local governments to create large increases in density in their Land Use By-Laws. In my opinion, these announcements are total gaslighting for votes with absolutely no thought as to who and how we are going to pay for the infrastructure required to support this increase in density. Things like water, sewer, transportation, medical support, roads, highways and parking.

I sit on a Board of Directors for a community water system. More density means greater water storage or more drilled wells drawing down the aquifer. We strive mightily to keep up with the increasing environmental laws and demands of new drinking water regulations, dam safety regulations and keeping the aging system working while trying to keep the service affordable. We apply to governments for infrastructure grants only to be turned down forcing us to have to borrow and heap more costs on to the people who worked hard and bought a home in the area.

In the last year or two, the federal government has brought in over a million immigrants who need jobs, homes and amenities. I am not against immigrants but some common sense is needed in meeting the infrastructure requirement needed to support all of these people. Right now the bill is being picked up by the ordinary working person and homeowners. I urge people to write or email our federal and provincial governments and ask for financial help supplying the local infrastructure required to meet the needs of the utilities to deal with the increased density being forced on them.

This year we have a provincial election and next year a federal election. I beg people to look very closely at your candidates and look for common sense and a desire to be fiscally responsible while dealing with our many problems and stay clear of candidates that are only concerned with flashy news releases with no thought to consequences other than creating votes and large governments who don't answer hard questions with anything but memorized talking points that are nothing but baloney.

Sincerely, John

Dear WWIND,

WHO is best to ask the Challenging question?
WHAT about the Cowichan Bay sewage outfall that is destroying Cowichan Bay sea life in the HERITAGE Cowichan River?

JUB (Joint Utility Board) Sewage Lagoons are located off Trunk / Tzouhalem / Marchmont Rd. Google - Marchmont Rd, Duncan to see the Sewage Lagoons location. The sewage outfall has been contaminating Cowichan Bay Shellfish for decades.

JUB treatment plant is a hybrid secondary/tertiary treatment plant located on the Cowichan River that treats wastewater from North Cowichan, Duncan, Cowichan Bay, Eagle Heights, and Cowichan Tribes land near Duncan and is operated by North Cowichan. The sewage is discharged at Cowichan Bay. For more information see the Outfall Relocation Project.

The treatment plant is on land leased from Cowichan Tribes. The lease agreement includes a commitment to make a reasonable effort to move the outfall from the Cowichan River. During periods of very low river flow, there is not enough flow to provide the desired amount of effluent dilution. North Cowichan and the CVRD state that low river flows are expected to become more frequent in the future, where is the urgency to come up with real solutions seen all over the rest of the world? Additionally; the existing outfall infrastructure is at risk of damage from log jams and gravel accumulation. Upgrades are required.

BY moving the outfall from the river location creating a healthy bay, there may then be space to reassess shellfish harvesting in Cowichan Bay. Contact: JUB@northcowichan.ca .

MNC (250) 746 3103

Concerned citizen, Joyce Behnsen

Dear WWIND,

Today I received my City of Duncan property tax notice. I was nervous about opening it, as last year I faced a $300 increase from the previous year. This year's bill is $441 MORE than last year! How on earth does an octogenarian on OAS and CPP, happy to volunteer but with no prospect of getting a job, no partner to help with their pensions; no alternative affordable living in sight, and having just paid $1000 more for home insurance than last year, with the cost of groceries through the roof be expected to face these amounts? Add on the water meter reading costs which exceed the cost of the actual water usage, and highly priced hearing aids and glasses, and don't be surprised to be offered MAIDS if it all becomes too much!!

One cannot help but think that the World Economic Forum's goal of "you will own nothing by 2030" is being supported by local as well as provincial and federal governments. I imagine our single-family homes, worked and paid for over a lifetime, are already being coveted by developers who will replace them with fourplexes that will bring in more property taxes; while we live in our vans or worse.

P. Foot. Duncan

Dear WWIND,

The hockey stick will disappear shortly. Why? The Cowichan Valley Regional District did not maintain the stick on a regular basis. That is applying high-quality waterproof paints, varnish, and stains regularly. Also regular maintenance checks on the structure in regards to surfaces affected by weather conditions. Complete ignorance on the part of the 18 directors who sit on the board of the Cowichan Valley Regional District. These 18 directors do not ignore their own personal assets. They all have regular maintenance done on their vehicles and maintenance of their homes.

The reason the CVRD gives us is that there was never any money available for the maintenance of the hockey stick. Why? The CVRD has an outrageous wage cost that is out of control like a stage four cancer. Total wage costs in 2019 were $19,512,340. Total wage costs in 2023 were $24,347,235. That is an increase of $4,834,895 or 24.7% over 5 years. In 2019, 43.2% of the payroll was for employees earning over $75,000 per year.

These percentages just keep rising year after year. In 2020, 47.4%, in 2021, 49.8%, in 2022, 50.6%, and in 2023, 57.9%. The yearly salary for the General Manager of Community Services was $170,806 in 2019. The yearly salary for the General Manager of Community Services was $194,701 in 2023. That is an increase of $23,895 or 13.9% over 5 years. Outrageous. Taxpayers can no longer keep paying this kind of wage. Employees earning these high wages do not need any more wage increases. There is a limit to every job's wage. Surely, with these outrageous costs, there could have been money available to pay for regular maintenance on the hockey stick.

In summary, the hockey stick will be gone, and taxpayers will have to vote out of office, the 18 Board directors because the above data once again proves that these 18 directors are not qualified to sit on the CVRD board. Unbelievable!

Joe Sawchuk, Duncan

Dear WWIND,

I am writing to express my deepest gratitude for your beautifully written rendition of my family's time living abroad in the Orient along with their 5 long years in a Shanghai prison camp (Edition 12 wwind.ca). Oddly enough, my family rarely spoke of this difficult period of their lives. Having the book In the Clutch of Circumstance for reference and a newspaper story from when my grandmother was interviewed by the local Victoria paper in 1965 allows me a vivid snapshot of their lives. I still have a few of their belongings that they carted across the waters with them, a beautiful hand-carved cedar chest that was bestowed to my grandmother by her parents for her 18th birthday along with an authentic mahjong tile set. Life often challenges us in many ways, my family embraced each and every step of their journey. My grandmother passed away in 1999 predeceased by my mother, Vivien in 1982.

Many thanks, Dopson family

Dear WWIND,

I was disappointed to not attend the Safe Spaces Educational Event at the Community Centre, on Sat. June 8th. I did not feel safe.

When my husband and I drove by the James Street Community Centre an hour before, we saw a rowdy mob in front of the Centre an hour before the event, to intimidate, harass and block those who wanted to attend to hear respected researchers speak about gender issues. Unfortunately, dealing with these traumatizing behaviours and abuse by counter-protesters, was something I chose not to expose myself to again. I did not feel safe based on similar events at a previous Nanaimo event. At this event, they screamed, "No Space for Hate", aggressively yelling and pushing signs into our faces, and clanging cowbells to drown out speakers, despite our peaceful group moving 3 times to avoid conflict.

I saw the same signs with this group. The hate and anger they displayed made their signs a complete irony. It's hard to fathom how this group waves signs claiming to promote "safe spaces for all", yet they object to safe spaces for all women and children in public facilities. The event scheduled had been pre-screened by Community Centre Staff and not considered to be hateful, yet this crowd of protesters was. RCMP was not there, despite the known violence this group has caused in Victoria and Nanaimo. This behaviour demonstrates they only believe in safe spaces for those who are LGBTQ2S+, rather than EVERYBODY. Apologies for any missed letter(s). This does not constitute discrimination or hate speech, just not being able to keep up with the constantly changing English language. I also believe that many gays and lesbians prefer NOT to be associated with this group because of their actions.

We need to stand together when it comes to PROTECTING CHILDREN AND PARENTAL RIGHTS FOR MINORS, WHICH IS THE ISSUE. It is very sad that this group refuses to have rational discussions and continues to create diversity. It is even sadder that Unions and taxpayer-supported government workers are encouraged to participate, sometimes during work days.

Lorene Benoit

Dear WWIND,

I'm sure the anti-fossil fuel climate change activists will be out in force due to the current heat wave in eastern Canada. Before you blame CO2 for this heat event, consider the unusually intense solar radiation and the natural "greenhouse" barrier of water vapour trapping heat at ground level. It's called humidity. Got it?

If you continue to believe the flawed "anti-gravity theory" of climate change, go ahead. CO2, like water vapour, cannot rise to 15 km above the planet to form a greenhouse layer and trap heat. It's heavier than air and stays closer to the ground. Understand?

This letter is for publication, but as usual, the Times Colonist may ignore it. If you receive this message, please pass it on, especially to those in the East experiencing this temporary climate change.

John Walker

Cobble Hill, B.C.

Dear WWIND,

On May 29th, Charles Borg, Marina Sapozhnikov and myself were invited by the South Vancouver Island Anglers Coalition to come to Sooke and take part in releasing 330,000 baby salmon into the Sooke Harbour.

South Vancouver Island Anglers Coalition is a not-for-profit society made up of volunteers with the goal of increasing the population of Chinook (Spring) Salmon on the west coast. The release we helped with was the second this year. Altogether they have released 630,000 baby salmon this year!

This group gets the baby salmon from the Nitinat Hatchery and then holds them and feeds them in two net pens for two or three weeks to imprint the baby salmon with the water coming from the Sooke River. They then release them on an outgoing tide close to dark so they make it into the Juan de Fuca quickly to dodge predators.

This method trucks the baby salmon past the river estuaries where by far the biggest mortality happens to baby salmon. Ducks, herons, other birds, trout and seals normally take up to 60% to 70% of the baby salmon coming down the river.

Did you know that salmon have a small bone in their heads that is similar to a fingerprint that tells them which water system they were born to? Because these baby salmon were hatched at the Nitinat Hatchery, they need two to three weeks to imprint on the water flowing out of the Sooke River. By the time they are released, they have fully imprinted on the waters of the Sooke River and will return to it.

In recent random checks of the salmon returning to the Sooke River, 50% and more were salmon that had been released by the South Vancouver Island Anglers Coalition coming back to spawn in the Sooke River where they had been released, demonstrating the success of this project! This system of stocking salmon was started by a partnership of fishing lodge owners and First Nations in Rivers Inlet and is enjoying huge success for fishers and whales alike.

In talking to the people who have donated hundreds of hours of labour as well as money, they have told me that the bureaucratic hurdles to get Permits has been horrendous! These Permits have taken up to two years to achieve, with a lot of money and time to hire one expert after another expert to satisfy the Fisheries bureaucracy even though the system has been well planned and proven.

All the money they have raised has been through fundraising and donations. The only contribution from the government is the fish from the hatchery. Fisheries even wanted to bill them for hauling the baby salmon from Nitinat Hatchery to Sooke. The good news is that they were able to talk Fisheries into forgiving the bill.

This coalition almost went broke during the coronavirus lock down rules and regulations which meant that they couldn't even meet outside! They managed to soldier on by their fingertips and continue this valuable program!

The Vancouver Island Anglers Coalition's goal is to get up to a million fish out of their Sooke pens and then start another release pen in Mill Bay and Cowichan Bay to bolster the local Chinook salmon fishery and get better returns to this area.

As I drove home that night I couldn't help but think what a great common sense project this is, while at the same time thinking it is brilliant! The Vancouver Island Anglers Coalition deserves all the help it can get; be it volunteer help or donated money.

John Money

As the Westward Independent slowly makes its way into other communities on the island, we will expand to include stories from these communities, as well as locals who 'council watch' as we do. Here is one of those folks from our neighbour to the north.

PORT SIDE REFLECTIONS

SAN GROUP PACKED IMMIGRANTS IN DEPLORABLE QUARTERS

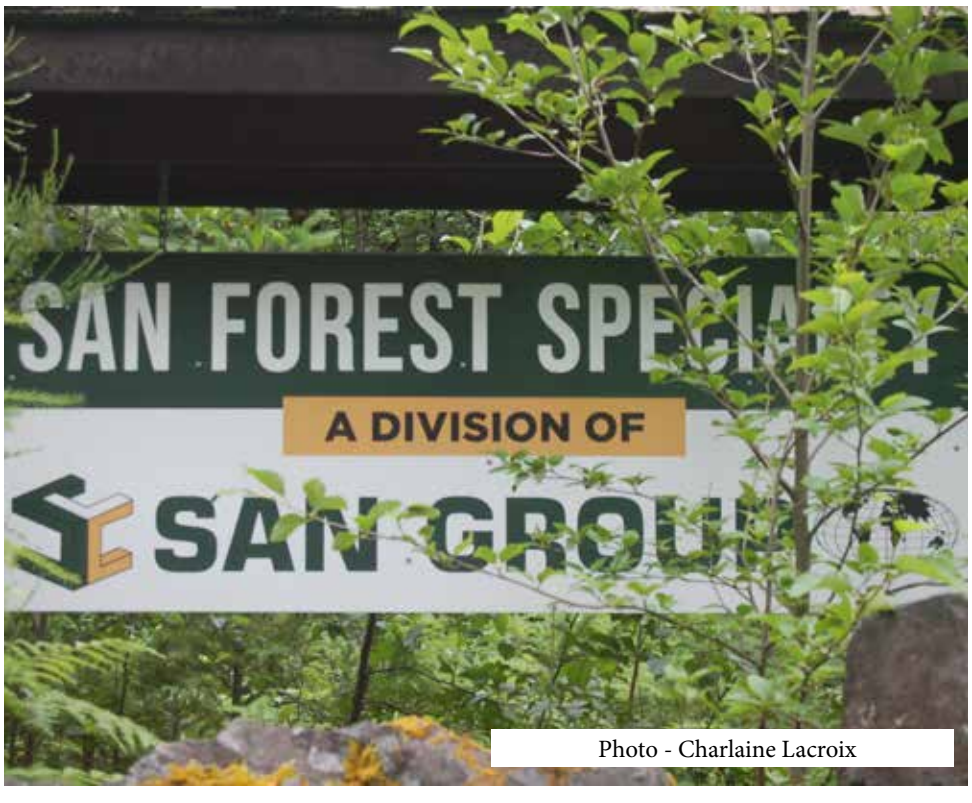


Photo - Charlaine Lacroix

News of immigrant workers crammed in an old mobile home and framed building with no running water and a bedroll for sleeping quarters made the headlines over the Canada long weekend.

After various sports teams heard about the deplorable conditions the Vietnamese workers were living under, letters to MP Gord Johns rolled out and our elected official took action and alerted Canada's Immigration Minister.

The Peak Radio Station in Port Alberni said 16 Vietnamese men were moved out of Port who had been housed with 24 other men in cramped quarters and charged $350 a month rent for a single bedroll.

The immigrants stated they paid $30,000 to come to Canada and were promised $30 an hour wage but upon arrival were told they were to earn $18 an hour with no overtime, no real shelter and a charge for a bedroll.

Over the weekend Major Michael Ramsay of the local Salvation Army brought in the Salvation Army's "Human Trafficking Unit" to Port Alberni to move some of the men to safe accommodations.

This is not the first time the SAN Group were caught treating immigrants like livestock and taking advantage of the more unfortunate.

According to the Peak News, a local Vietnamese Kim Tran said, "This is the worst - I have never seen people live like this in Vietnam."

- Charlaine Lacroix, Port Alberni

PORT ALBERNI LOG TRAIN TRAIL TOWNHALL SEES COMMUNITY VOICES HEARD

This is a third townhall organized by ACRD Directors Fred Boyko and Susan Roth with Cherry Creek Director Mike Sparrow joining in on June 18, 2024 at McLeans Mill, in Port Alberni, BC.

The 18-km Log Train Trail Regional Park runs through all three ridings; Cherry Creek, Beaver Creek and the Beaufort Range.

The jest of this townhall was to listen and educate the users of the 18-km Log Train Trail about the proper Etiquette regarding horses, motorized vehicles and walkers.

Although the Alberni-Cllayoquot Regional District (ACRD) is still awaiting lease approval from Transportation Department and the Ministry for motorized and horse trail use; ATVs, dirt bikes, and horses, are now a common sight. The main concern, however, is respect for all users.

Motorized vehicles yield to bicycles, walkers and especially horses. "The last thing we want is to spook a horse - then have an accident and have to kill it," Director Boyko told the crowd of over 100 attendees.

Bicycles yield to walkers and horses. Walkers yield to horses and dogs are to be kept by walkers command. Signs regarding the etiquette of trail use will be mounted once gvt. approval is given.

Some residents complained about motorized vehicle noise that have increased since the multi-use trail was accepted. But that was quickly overridden as Boyko said "You move to a residence by the airport and then complain about the noise."

Many issues were discussed; maintenance, ie "If a tree falls down and by one hour, it should be delt with," Boyko told the crowd. A community of trail users is the design the directors want to see.

A committee is to be established by varied users to work on future fair use for everyone of this wonderful trail as there are still many issues to be dealt with.

It is a welcome community endeavour sought by so many for so long and let us hope this new open outdoor group venture will thrive for years to come as so many trails and roads have seen locked gates and closed access to the public in recent years.

- Charlaine Lacroix, Port Alberni



Photo - Charlaine Lacroix

TWO HOURS NOTICE TO EVACUATE AND TAKE NO BELONGINGS



Photo - Charlaine Lacroix

Residents of the Port Pub in Port Alberni, BC, were given two hours notice on May 29, 2024, to evacuate their residence as the building was deemed having "hazardous materials."

After parts of a ceiling caved in, and some drywall was hit, tests were run on some of the fallen drywall where it was determined to contain asbestos. The building was then found to be an "Airborne Hazard."

There are quotes from 24 to 27 residents (no one seems to know exactly how many people rented rooms it seems) who had to be relocated - some finding permanent housing while others were allocated shelter spaces.

The City CAO Mike Fox said "They will bring the residents' items to a place so they can get their belongings."

The building is in disrepair and a demolition order is underway. Concern over which governmental agency will foot the bill is now the issue - the Provincial Govt., the City, BC Housing and/or the owner.

The fact remains, the unknown amount of residents living in these quarters for some time were evacuated once the hazard notice was given and allowed only two hours to move without their personal belongings.

The Port Pub is situated on the main drag of Port Alberni where the town's waterfront center just blocks down the road has seen much refurbishing with multiplex condo structures built and being tabled to be erected.

Many of the city's old buildings contain asbestos with no mention of hazardous situations where the residents or workers are needed to be evicted.

In my opinion, this was a good reason to evacuate the building, get the building demolished, put the lot up for sale for tax costs and see another multiplex condo highrise erected in the center of the city where the complete community or 15-minute city design is being highly pushed.

- Charlaine Lacroix, Port Alberni

PORT ALBERNI CITY COUNCIL ERECTS LOG BARRIER IN CHAMBER ROOM



Photo - Charlaine Lacroix

Safety issues by City Council members necessitated erecting a new wooden log-type partition in City Council Chambers this May of 2024.

The structure limits access from taxpayers to enter into close contact with council members.

When asked if Council members ever felt frightened from a community member, Councillor Debbie Haggard said, "She now parks her car under a street light and sometimes asks for assistance to her car after council meetings."

- Charlaine Lacroix, Port Alberni

BLOSSOMS, BEGONIAS, AND BACKYARD BLISS: SUMMER GARDENING TIPS

Dear Gardening Friends, After an unusually cool damp spring the good news is that our aquifers are filled, blossoms are lasting a long time and tomatoes are forming nicely. The potatoes I planted are so tall that I couldn't hill them any longer and we had to build a box around them to contain the soil!

By staying on top of weeding in spring, there are fewer weeds hiding under the spreading branches of flowers and shrubs. This leaves me with plenty of time to deadhead and hand water. Watering needs increase as roots fill the pots and warm weather arrives. There is intense competition between the roots for water and nutrition. If you are growing flowering annuals in a pot or basket I recommend the largest pot you have and add fertilizer to keep the blossoms coming until Thanksgiving weekend.

There is nothing so attractive to me as pots and baskets surrounding a home's door. There is still time to make up some lovely flower arrangements to say "Welcome" to family and friends. I always like to make a container look full so I tend to over-plant but the results are usually stunning. Add some tall plants and some that will tumble over the edge of the pot. Make your planting monochromatic or contrasting. Nature will make it all beautiful when put together! By removing spent blossoms, plants are encouraged to renew their flowers and keep blossoming. Don't allow any of your plants to dry out. If they do, fill a bucket or wheelbarrow with water and submerge the entire plant underwater overnight. This will allow the plant to renew itself.



Photo - Carol Money

If you would like to make your own fertilizer, try this recipe: 4 parts alfalfa meal, 1 part dolomite lime, 1 part rock phosphate OR ½ part bone meal and 1 part kelp meal. Mix very well. This fertilizer is organic and good to use as a top dressing. Mulching with compost or well-rotted manure is a great way to slow down weed growth and evaporation of water. A bonus is that the mulch will break down and supply nutrients to your plants!

I like to thin out my rows of vegetables on a regular basis. There is too much competition for nutrition and sun if they are grown too close together and the closeness provides the perfect environment for molds and slugs to hide. I carefully seeded my carrots but I still have had to thin them several times. Most of your thinnings can be eaten and are delicious and full of flavour. Pick your vegetables daily as smaller vegetables taste wonderful! If you have room to plant some vegetables for a winter garden, pick up your seeds now as unsold seeds are sent back to their originating retailers in summer. Start your winter vegetables at the end of July. This will give them enough heat to get going and they will come into their prime in fall. Lettuce can be started later as it sprouts and grows quite quickly. Romaine lettuce needs summer heat but there are many delicious varieties of leaf lettuce that can be started in August. As well, direct sow arugula, asian greens, endive, radicchio, snow peas, and spinach in late August.

If you want to grow perennials from seed, July is the perfect time to start them. Sow seeds in sterilized seed starter mix, keep in a warm sunny spot and mist regularly until they are up. Thin out to allow room for robust root growth and by next summer you will be able to plant out these indispensable garden plants. Favourite geranium cuttings can be taken in mid August as they will root beautifully. I put a number of cuttings into a pot, removing all leaves but one or two at the top and put into slightly moistened soil in a bright location. Begonias are one of the easiest plants to grow. I save my corms from year to year, using a loose humus rich soil and plant with the crown just below soil level. My favourite begonia is Non Stop Begonia and true to it's name, once it starts flowering, it doesn't stop until frost visits them in fall. Did you know that Non Stop Begonias have male and female blossoms? The female has multiple petals like a full rose and the male is a simple flower of single petals surrounding the stamens. Pick off the male florets so the plant will have more showy female blossoms. Begonias are an extremely lovely plant with wing shaped handsome leaves. I also love the beautiful foliage of Begonia Dragon Wings. Try some! I think you will be very pleased. I grow a lot of marigolds as I love their vibrant colours and ease of growth. I remove spent flowers and throw them into the vegetable garden where many of them sprout and grow until dug into the garden in fall. They are good for the soil.



Photo - Carol Money

Remember to tie up your tomatoes every week and keep your broccoli and kale picked often to keep it from bolting into flowers. If you are growing spinach and peas, it is time to pull them out and plant something else, such as tomatoes, carrots or beets in their place that will keep producing in the heat of summer. Put on your To Do list, "enjoy your garden". Sometimes we get so busy that we forget to take the time to just sit in our gardens and drink in the beauty with our eyes. Invite friends and family over for dinner in the garden, or just a cuppa and a visit. What about the new neighbour in the area? Why not extend a warm welcome by asking them over? You may meet a new best friend!

Have a wonderful summer, Carol Money

Community Anti-Crime Presentation

Invitation to COWICHAN and area residents

Learn how to protect yourself, family and property from crime.

Learn about legal authorities, recommended preparedness, response options; including use of force.

This community presentation is by local resident Barry Holland, author of No More Mr. Nice-guy and renown public speaker and instructor.

Location: THE HUB, 2375 Koksilah Rd, Duncan, BC

Date: Wednesday, July 17, 2024. 7:00 to 9:00pm
(doors open at 6:30pm) Questions? neighbourshelpingneighbours@protonmail.com

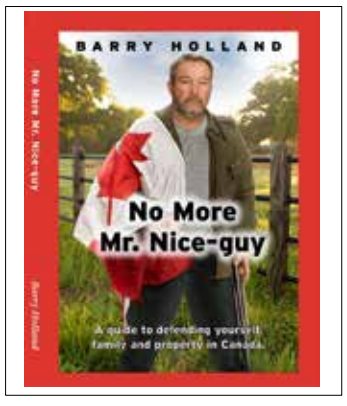
Cost: $20 donation

Don't miss this opportunity to get the straight goods on personal and property protection.

About the speaker:

35 years' experience of army, policing, special forces and security contracting.

Has taught and consulted for various levels of military, police, and private citizens both foreign and domestic.



WHEN MLAS GET IN ON THE CANCEL CULTURE TREND

Dear Sonia, Regarding the letter (attached) that was sent to Mayor Alto, I have to say, I'm a little confused at your stance.

Having attended both days as a videographer I can say without any reservation not a whisper of what you infer occurred, nor did I suspect would occur leading up to the event (with the exception of media outlets like CHEK and Times Colonist, and letters like yours, planting that seed into the public consciousness).

I suspect you and many others have been fed a line and you all bit...hook line and sinker and are now being used as foot soldiers by those who wish to divide us as a society and as a result control us as a society.

If you had attended you would have learned quite quickly what it was all about...freedom of speech. If it's your stance to quell such a thing, and were successful, you would be succeeding in silencing yourself in the future. In the words of Hon. Brian Peckford, the last living co-author of our Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, he says "I may not agree with what you have to say, but I will defend with my life, your right to say it".

Thank you Mayor Alto for not capitulating to such pressure. You did the right thing. For anyone in media reading this, please uphold journalistic integrity and stop being part of the problem...you're not doing yourself, your children and future generations any favours.

Regards, Dan Peruzzo

"Her Worship Marianne Alto Mayor, City of Victoria MAlto@victoria.ca ,

Mayor Alto, I write to share my concern with the use of the Victoria Conference Centre, a City of Victoria-owned and operated venue, for an upcoming conference which is designed to spread disinformation and hate. Organizers and speakers at the 'We Unify' conference, scheduled to be held at the Victoria Conference Centre on 22 and 23 June have been banned from multiple countries for hate speech, and have a history of spouting hateful rhetoric that dehumanizes transgender and other 2SLGBTQIA+ people. Allowing this event to take place at a city-run venue implies City of Victoria support of this event, in direct contradiction of the "Declaration of Ongoing Solidarity with Gender-Diverse Residents of Victoria," adopted on November 9th, 2023. This declaration states that the Victoria City Council "condemns any and all anti-SOGI mobilizations that seek to undermine the rights and dignity of gender-diverse individuals and their families within our city" and "calls upon community leaders to denounce attacks on transgender and gender-diverse individuals." Transgender individuals already face significant challenges, including discrimination, violence, and lack of access to essential services. Allowing speakers who embrace and promote hate speech against them only serves to perpetuate stigma and harm, further marginalizing an already vulnerable population. I believe that the Victoria Conference Centre needs to uphold the inherent rights of all Canadians to live free from persecution and violence, and that as a city, we must take a strong stance against hosting those who promote hate in any of its forms. I urge you to consider the impact this event being hosted by the City of Victoria Conference Centre will have on Victoria's 2SLGBTQIA+ community and to please uphold the commitment made in the 2023 Declaration that was adopted by council.

Yours sincerely, Sonia Furstenau Leader, BC Green Party"

CVRD'S QUESTIONABLE DEALINGS WITH NATURE'S TRUST AND DUCKS UNLIMITED

I am the Chair of the Landkeepers Society and am responding to your recent article about the presentation to the CVRD Committee of the Whole by Reed Bailey.

Mr. Bailey is a highly respected Land Use Planner from the Ministry of Agriculture and Food. Landkeepers have had positive conversations with him in the past sharing concerns about the lack of attention and priority to Farming and Food Security in BC. His concern about the loss of viable farmland is shared with Landkeepers. Our Mission Statement is to support and advocate for all Farmers and Private property owners province-wide.

Conversations with Mr. Bailey, Mr. Bejay Mills, Community Agrologist as well as Mr. Ian Paton MLA, Provincial Agriculture Critic all echo the concern that Agriculture and Food Security has become highly unimportant to those in elected positions. Pam Alexis, MLA and Minister of Agriculture and Food significantly reduced the opportunity for Mr. Paton to bring forward the multiple concerns of Farmers and Allied Services at Committee several months back. Ms. Alexis stated that Farmers primary concern is "Climate Change"

The Citizen article dated June 20, 2024 headlines on page A23, "ALR just 5% of land" This is BCs only secure farmland designated by the original designers of the ALR Commission The ALC became law in 1973 and without it BC would likely have no farmland left in production. Food security is compromised in BC. Mr. Bailey's plea to the Bureaucrats and Directors of the CVRD to "ensure the land continues to be used for growing food" should not to be taken lightly.

Landkeepers have been actively working to discover the truth about an agreement made between the CVRD and "Stakeholders, "Nature's Trust and Ducks Unlimited" to destroy 170 acres of farmland on the Cowichan Bay Estuary. The first phase of the project saw the dikes surrounding 45 acres of the farm flattened by Nature's Trust and Ducks Unlimited with no apparent consultation or approval. Attempts to find proof that this was done following regulations has not succeeded. Please take a drive down Western Terminal Road and see the results for yourself. This part of the farm was designated Class! farmland, in the ALR and was highly productive. It is now an abandoned and unattractive area that upon observation supports little waterfowl and bird populations. References to the restoration plan for this land is vague. First Nations neighbours residing in the area state they have no knowledge of this being returned to Traditional Food Source in spite of press releases that state they are "On board" Landkeepers question why the goal to restore Traditional food source has not yet been initiated on this property.

The initiative to restore the larger portion from Class 1 sub-irrigated highly productive farmland overlooks several critical concerns. Landkeepers' pressure supported by hundreds of local citizens and farmers resulted in Nature's Trust engaging in the legal process to apply for the removal of the land from the ALR to remove the protective surrounding dike. It became abundantly clear through FOI reports that CVRD was aware and involved in the project in spite of their denials that are on record. Public consultation did not take place.

The sewage treatment facility on the Heritage Cowichan River dumps contaminated effluent into Cowichan Bay and has resulted in closure of the harvesting of all shellfish from the Bay for over thirty years. Dike removal and flooding over the 170-acre parcel will result in highly contaminated salt water being washed continuously over the land. Restoring this marshland to produce Traditional crops that will be available for community consumption is reckless. Sewage contaminants and toxins from wood pylons have been leaching into the bay for over a century. I have not seen any reference to addressing the contamination anywhere in the plans and proposals and the timeline as to when food production would ensure the food is safe for human consumption.

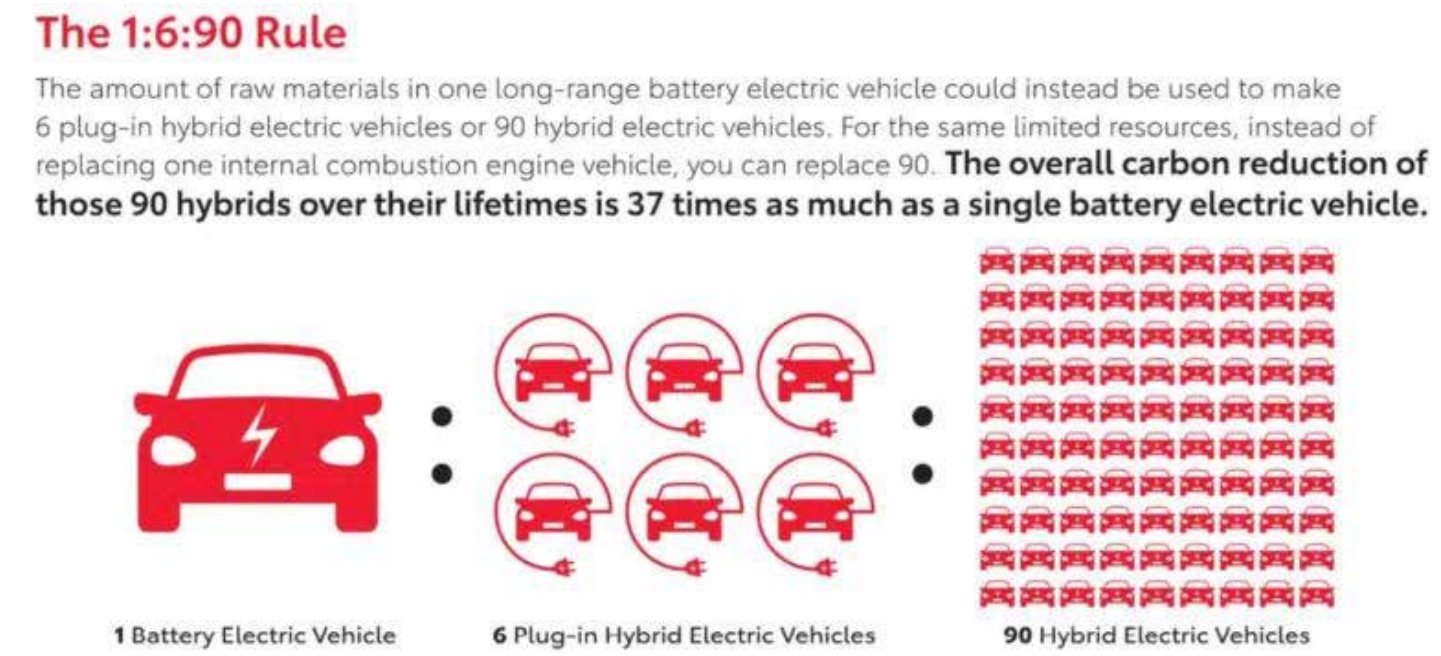
The Risk of salt water incursion into nearby source water wells in the area has been clearly proven in the Hydrology Assessment Report commissioned by Landkeepers and completed by Active Earth Engineering Ltd. Multiple other serious risks were also identified in the report. Landkeepers have offered this report to various government agencies who have shown no interest in reviewing its findings. The public is welcome to have a copy of this report.

The loss of an additional 170 acres of Class1 sub-irrigated farmland is unacceptable. Feed is grown on this land that is the highest quality available on the Island. Three local dairies rely on the crops as well as smaller local producers such as goat farmers and horse stables

Farmers will be forced to bring feed in from off Island. Canadian Farmers are already in crisis and our food security is increasingly jeopardized. The former Dinsdale Farm property in question must be preserved. Please contact Governments at all levels and voice your support for our local farmers, Staff at the Ministry of Agriculture and Food as well as Kim Grout, CEO of the ALC. Food security is an election issue.

Ruth Waddell, Chair, Landkeepers

ELECTRIFICATION OF ALL VEHICLES, IS IT ACTUALLY POSSIBLE?



In December 2022, Justin Trudeau's government announced that 100% of all new vehicles sold in Canada by 2035 must be zero-emission electric vehicles, and Joe Biden's government introduced the Inflation Reduction Act, which set the same requirement. Sounds good, right? It'll help save the planet from climate catastrophe. And we can do this, right? Well... no.

Here's the problem: electric vehicles require a substantial amount of critical elements to, not only build the cars, but the batteries too. In fact, on average, an electric vehicle requires 145lbs of graphite, 88lbs of nickel, 30lbs of cobalt, 20lbs of lithium, 115lbs of copper (3x to 5x times as much as its internal-combustion engine (ICE) counterpart) and 50lbs of manganese (2x to 3x as much as an ICE). An ICE does not generally contain graphite, nickel, cobalt or lithium in its manufacture.(1)

A recent study from the University of Michigan(2) was very clear – there isn't enough known copper in the world to electrify the USA, let alone the rest of the world. "A normal (ICE) Honda Accord needs about 40 pounds of copper. The same battery electric Honda Accord needs almost 200 pounds of copper," said Adam Simon, University of Michigan professor of earth and environmental studies. Of course, there is still the need for copper in many other products and industries, including other renewable energy products like wind turbines. Simon continued, "Onshore wind turbines require about 10 tons of copper, and in offshore wind turbines, that amount can more than double."

The study examined 120 years of global data from copper mining companies and calculated how much copper the U.S. electricity infrastructure and fleet of cars would need to upgrade to renewable energy. It found that renewable energy's copper needs would outstrip what copper mines can produce at the current rate. "We show in the paper that the amount of copper needed is essentially impossible for mining companies to produce."

The researchers found that between 2018 and 2050, the world will need to mine 115% more copper than has been mined in all of human history, just to meet "business as usual" copper needs, including equitable global development (third-world countries bringing on energy projects, requiring substantial copper for their development & delivery of energy), without considering the green energy transition. In fact, a 55% increase in copper mines would need to be opened in order to meet the worldwide need for copper. On average, in the U.S., it takes 20 years to get a new copper mine opened from a viable find through to initial production, due to regulatory and environmental requirements.

The study focused solely on copper mining. What wasn't mentioned in this study is the sourcing and mining of all the other critical elements. In fact, the World Bank's report on the mineral intensity of the clean energy transition states, "production of graphite, lithium, and cobalt will need to be significantly ramped up by more than 450 percent by 2050—from 2018 levels—to meet demand from energy storage technologies."(3) In fact, their own footnote to that statement says, "These projections may be conservative and will most likely be larger in a 1.50C-degree scenario, which demands solutions to be implemented faster, and at a larger scale." Translation: Highly unlikely, especially as significantly higher demand will increase the costs of materials and mining across the board, and make sourcing of materials even more difficult.

So where does that leave us? Is this green transition to electrifying our vehicles dead in the water? Maybe not. Some major manufacturers, like Toyota, are taking a dim view on fully battery electric vehicles, and instead focusing on plug-in hybrids or regular hybrids. In a recent leaked confidential internal email, Toyota showed that the amount of raw materials required for one battery electric vehicle could be used to manufacture six plug-in hybrids or ninety regular hybrids; what Toyota calls the "1:6:90 Rule". As reported by Yahoo! Autos: "Essentially what Toyota is saying here is that sourcing the materials for batteries is going to dramatically increase and therefore the costs and difficulty of getting those materials will subsequently rise. The automaker's position is that those materials can be turned into a lot more hybrids at more affordable price points versus PHEV and EV models. Toyota also makes the point that the charging infrastructure in the U.S. right now still has a long way to go before it can handle a proliferation of full EV models on the roadways. The other hurdle for most Americans is that EVs and PHEVs can be expensive compared to their gas or hybrid counterparts. Now that the Inflation Reduction Act has eliminated a substantial chunk of EV/PHEV vehicles that qualify for the tax credit, dealers and automakers are reporting a reduced interest in those vehicles."(4)

So the short answer is, no, Justin and Joe, your green transition to fully battery electric vehicles isn't possible, currently. Could it be, in the future, if we permit hundreds of new mines and source more minerals? Potentially. But that's a big bet with huge risk, and no certain outcome. Is that something we want our governments to do? Unlikely.

Rod R. Slater, North Cowichan

(1) https://www.iea.org/data-and-statistics/charts/minerals-used-in-electric-cars-compared-to-conventional-cars

(2) https://news.umich.edu/copper-cant-be-mined-fast-enough-to-electrify-the-us/

(3) https://pubdocs.worldbank.org/en/961711588875536384/Minerals-for-Climate-Action-The-Mineral-Intensity-of-the-Clean-Energy-Transition.pdf

(4) https://autos.yahoo.com/why-toyota-isnt-rushing-sell-154000759.html



WHEN INCLUSIVITY HURTS: THE EXCLUSION OF STRAIGHT WHITE WOMEN FROM DOULA SCHOLARSHIPS

A local woman contacted the Westward Independent to share her disappointment that she was unable to get a scholarship to help her further her dream of becoming a Dula . We looked into her claims and found that she was in fact excluded from any ability to get financial help from this well-known group that trains new Dulas internationally.

In the pursuit of inclusivity and diversity, some organizations unintentionally create barriers that exclude certain groups. One such example is Doula Training International (DTI), whose scholarship program's exclusionary criteria raise questions about fairness and equality. The issue at hand is the restriction of their scholarships to BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color), trans, two-spirited, or gender non-conforming individuals, thereby excluding straight white women.

DTI's website states: "Issues of gender and identity are still received with much confusion and discrimination within the birth culture." While it is crucial to address these issues and support marginalized communities, the exclusion of straight white women from scholarship opportunities is problematic. These women, especially those from low-income backgrounds, face significant barriers in accessing education and training programs. By excluding them, DTI is perpetuating a different form of discrimination.

The scholarship program aims to offer a minimum of 60 scholarships per year, funded through a pay-it-forward model where 25% of all full-paying members' tuition fees contribute to the scholarship fund. However, the criteria for eligibility explicitly state: "Our scholarship program is for anyone who is BIPOC and/or trans, two-spirited or gender non-conforming." This clearly excludes straight white women, regardless of their financial status or personal circumstances.

The term "birthing community" used by DTI is another point of contention. It is a broad and somewhat vague term that seems to encompass a wide range of individuals involved in the birth process. Traditionally, the focus has been on mothers, as they are the ones giving birth. By using the term "birthing community," there is a shift away from acknowledging the unique experiences and needs of mothers, who are central to the birth process. This change in terminology can be confusing and may dilute the specific support and attention that mothers require during childbirth.

Adding to the confusion is DTI's claim of commitment to inclusivity. Their website states: "We are also committed to inclusivity. Birthing people and birth workers are women, trans, non-binary, or other genders. We know that everyone who gives birth deserves quality care, but issues of gender and identity are still received with much confusion and discrimination within the birth culture." This statement underscores the hypocrisy in their scholarship policy. If DTI truly believes in inclusivity, their scholarship program should reflect this by being open to all individuals who face barriers, regardless of their race, gender, or sexual orientation. Excluding straight white women from the scholarship program contradicts their commitment to inclusivity and undermines the goal of providing quality care for all who give birth.

In striving for inclusivity, it is essential to avoid creating new forms of exclusion. Doula Training International's scholarship program, while well-intentioned, fails to consider the needs and challenges of low-income straight white women who aspire to become doulas. These women, deserve access to education and opportunities to support their communities. Instead of creating divisions, scholarship programs should aim to support all individuals in need, regardless of their race, gender, or sexual orientation.

It is time for organizations like DTI to rethink their approach to inclusivity. True inclusivity means providing equal opportunities for everyone, without excluding any group. By broadening the criteria for their scholarship program, DTI can ensure that all aspiring Doulas, regardless of their background, have the chance to pursue their dreams and contribute to the birthing community.

While the intention behind Doula Training International's scholarship program is meant to present as commendable, and possibly reach their DEI (Diversity Equity and Inclusion score) goals for possible funding, its execution is flawed. Excluding straight white women, especially those from low-income backgrounds, is unfair and counterproductive. Furthermore, the use of ambiguous terms like "birthing community" instead of "mothers" can create confusion and detract from the specific needs of those giving birth. Inclusivity should not come at the expense of fairness, and it is crucial for organizations to find a balance that supports all individuals equally.

THIN-SKINNED LEADERSHIP: WHY OUR ELECTED OFFICIALS NEED TO TOUGHEN UP



Dear CVRD Elected Officials,

It appears that our local elected have taken a page from the manual of "How to Muzzle Citizens 101." Any time someone dares to raise a concern or voice their frustrations, the conversation is promptly shut down. It's reminiscent of dealing with a customer service issue at a fast food drive-thru. Imagine complaining about your order only to have the attendant say, "Our burgers are perfect; drive on." It seems that's the level of discourse we're dealing with here. We've heard farmers trying to voice concerns about bylaw issues and citizens claiming harassment from staff when attempting to resolve situations. Yet, at the mere suggestion of the word "harassment," the chair promptly retorts, "Our staff don't harass anyone," and that's the end of the discussion.

How comforting.

Leadership isn't about stifling voices; it's about listening to them, even when they're inconvenient or uncomfortable. A good leader creates an environment where people feel comfortable voicing their concerns. Instead, what we're witnessing is a "softness" that's not just ineffective but downright "gross," to borrow a phrase from the public sentiment.

Imagine if our ancestors had this level of thin skin. The country would still be negotiating the color of the first flag. The reality is that leadership requires more than just a title and a gavel. It requires the ability to handle criticism, dissect it, and extract valuable takeaways to improve governance. It's about having the strength to stand in the face of dissent and the wisdom to see it as a tool for growth.

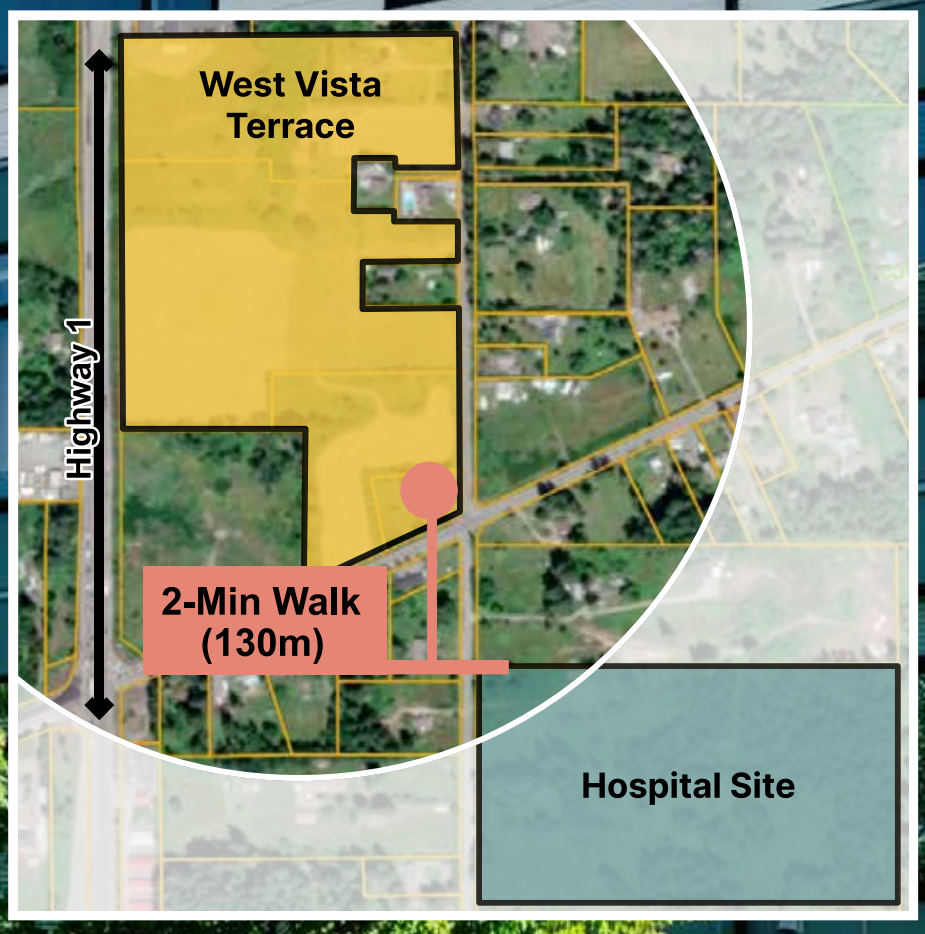
So, to our local elected, it's time to toughen up. The public isn't asking for much—just a platform to voice their thoughts without being immediately dismissed. Think of it as a customer feedback session at your local drive-thru. Sometimes the complaints are legitimate, and fixing them could make the service a whole lot better.

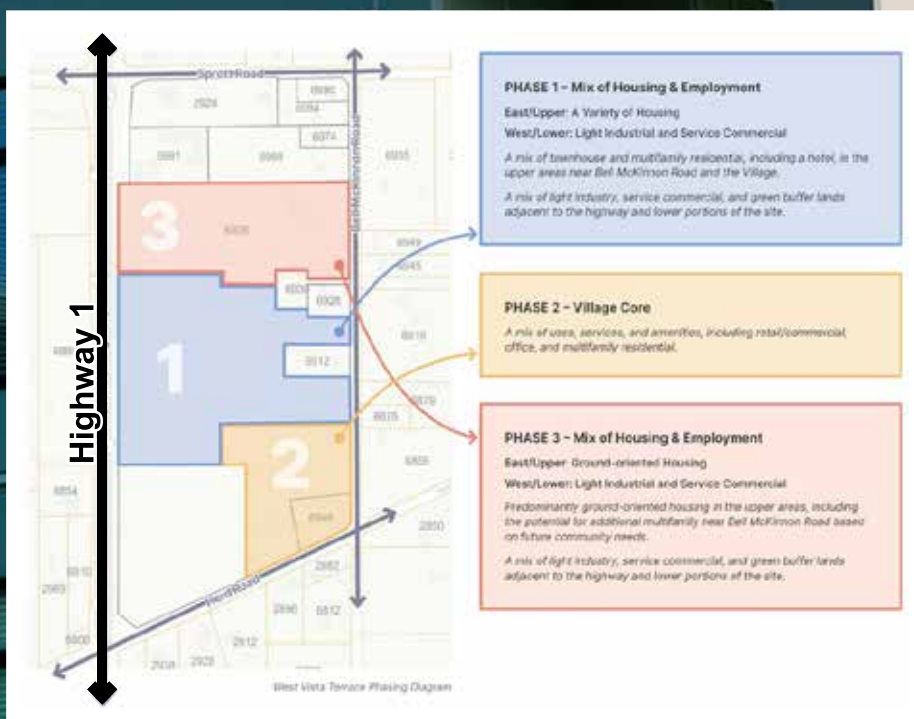
Let's aim for a leadership that isn't just about shutting down conversations but one that fosters open dialogue, embraces criticism, and actually listens. After all, if a fast food chain can handle a complaint about a missing burger, surely our elected officials can manage a bit of public input without getting their feelings hurt.

- Staff

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