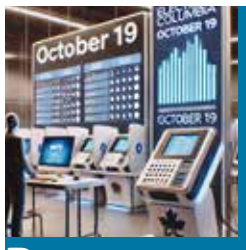
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SOUTH ISLAND MUNICIPALITIES HIT WITH 911 FUNDING BOMBSHELL

NEW E-COMM COSTS FORCE TAX HIKES AS PROVINCE SHIFTS BURDEN TO LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

The recent announcement that ten South Island municipalities will need to fully fund E-Comm 911 services by next April is deeply concerning.

For years, the cost-sharing model split between the provincial and federal governments helped ensure that the financial burden of 911 services was equitably distributed. Now, with this abrupt policy shift, local governments are scrambling to cover significant new expenses, which will likely result in higher property taxes for residents.

Langford, for instance, is expected to shoulder around $800,000 annually for E-Comm services, leading to an approximate 5% tax increase. Colwood anticipates a tax hike of about 2% to cover its share, estimated at more than $500,000



Sooke Mayor Maja Tait has voiced her concerns over this change, hoping for reconsideration from the province. She was shocked to learn that the plan would proceed despite municipal objections. Colwood Councillor Ian Ward also warns of the significant financial strain on smaller municipalities like his.

Adding to the frustration is the fact that the provincial and federal governments continue to fund RCMP dispatch services in other regions of B.C., making South Island communities feel unfairly targeted. The silence from the Ministry of Public Safety in response to the united appeals from affected mayors only exacerbates the issue.

As the provincial election nears, residents need to push for accountability. If the province is making financial commitments elsewhere, it should ensure that critical services like 911 dispatch are funded equitably across the board. If not reversed, this decision risks undermining local budgets and shattering public trust in the provincial government's ability to govern fairly.

The ten South Island municipalities affected by the shift in E-Comm 911 funding are: Colwood; Ladysmith; Langford; North Cowichan; North Saanich; Sidney; Sooke; View Royal; Central; Saanich; Esquimalt - These municipalities will have to fully fund the E-Comm 911 services by April, which was previously subsidized by both provincial and federal governments.



CASH REWARD OFFERED!

In a twist of irony, it seems a local group of zealots has decided to fight free speech by snatching up stacks of our papers (AND STANDS!) and chucking them straight into the recycling bins—how environmentally conscious of them, right? Can you imagine the audacity? Disregarding the right to read and the environment all in one go!

But don't worry, we're turning their crusade into a little game of our own. We're offering a cash reward to anyone who catches one of these unfriendly community members in the act. Why, you ask? So we can share their eco-friendly antics all over our social media!

Catch a vandal? Win a prize! Nothing says fun like defending free speech and exposing the hypocrisy of cancellation warriors!

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We are proud to support locals!

We unearth exclusive Valley stories and events that remain hidden elsewhere. With passion and fearlessness, we expose what happens behind closed doors, giving you a sneak peek into the heart of our community.

When you choose to advertise with us you reach your customer like never before. Gone are the days of being lost within crowds of irrelevant products, get yourself front and center!

YET THEY SLEPT - BY LESLIE HURON

"Death tolls from the pages lept.
Yet they slept.
Yet they slept
Not the disease -
that's not it,
hardly a bit.
Higher and higher the injuries crept.
Yet they slept.
Yet they slept.
Not from the infection.
From the power plays,
The lonely days.
The lies continued to be imperfect.
Yet they slept.
Yet they slept.
Powerless, defenceless.
To see their loved ones again,
arm sleeves rolled.
The caregiving inept.
Yet they slept.
Yet they slept.
Later, their eyes rolled.
Final stories untold.
Sent alone into the cold.
Humanity deficit.
Yet they slept.
Yet they slept.
Point of inflection.
Constant deflection.
Disinformation nation.
Yet they slept.
Yet they slept.
Choose truth over sleep.
Lest you weep.
Lest you weep.
2021 Copyright.
Creative Commons licensing applies. Inspired by and dedicated to Dr. Vernon Coleman, An Old Man In a Chair".

Dr. Coleman is a journalist (UK - Sun, Daily Star, Sunday Correspondent, The People), broadcaster and doctor.

Also dedicated to a dear Dad, who passed away alone in a 'care' home in late 2020. with family begging at the door to be let in.

Dad was also an old man in a chair. He's in Heaven now.

For the full story about Dr. Vernon and Dad, with relevant links, see the online article, posted in Westward Independent, October 2024.

A group has gotten together to pour a lot of work into a website for the election - politicalscorecards.ca
You can download a letter to send to the candidate of your choice to answer questions and take the pledge.

SmartVote BC 2024

Introduction Letter - Questionnaire for MLA Candidates

Dear MLA candidate,

Congratulations on your candidacy in the upcoming election of MLAs in British Columbia. Please allow me to introduce **SmartVoteBC2024**.

SmartVoteBC2024 is a nonpartisan, grassroots organization, whose aim is to assist British Columbians to become aware of the risks and benefits of legislation as it pertains to their constitutional rights and freedoms, property, families, and persons. We support the idea that all public officeholders are both servants of the public and stewards of public resources and, in that role, they should govern themselves by the widely accepted *Nolan Principles of Public Life*.

SmartVoteBC2024 is organizing election-readiness Town Halls across the province beginning in September. These Town Halls are recorded and also live-streamed to help voters get ready for the Oct 19 election.

To give voters a clearer picture of where you stand on important issues, we have created a **Questionnaire for Candidates**, which is attached. This questionnaire is being distributed to all parties and independents and will help us to create political scorecards. These scorecards will be influenced by the response to this questionnaire, past voting history of MLAs, and verified public statements. Your scorecard can be viewed by the public at www.politicalscorecards.ca .

LUXURY OR NECESSITY? COWICHAN DIRECTORS SPLIT OVER $240,000 TECH UPGRADE

In the September 25th Regular Board Meeting of the CVRD, the board discussed the approval of a $240,000 upgrade to the boardroom's audiovisual (AV) and web streaming system. The proposed resolution would amend the 2024 budget for general government, transferring $240,000 from reserves to cover the capital expense. The debate centred around whether this expenditure was necessary or excessive.

Chair Stone, a former IT professional, acknowledged the need for the upgrades, noting the current system was pieced together with "chewing gum and tin foil" and had reached the end of its functional life. However, he mentioned the system felt like a "Cadillac" solution, suggesting it might be more luxurious than necessary.

Director Douglas agreed with Chair Stone's concerns. While he recognized the importance of upgrading the outdated technology, he expressed discomfort with the high cost, particularly when many residents are struggling with the cost of living. He emphasized that while $240,000 might not seem like much per taxpayer, the optics of such a significant expenditure could be problematic. He suggested looking for lower-cost options that would still improve reliability.

Director Wilson was the most vocal opponent of the expenditure. He questioned the specifics of the proposal, asking for more details on the cost breakdown, particularly the price of the cameras and televisions. He noted that the resolution lacked clear technical specs and stated that without further details, he could not support moving forward. Wilson even mentioned pricing the cameras himself and raised concerns about the high cost of the TVs, asking if they were expensive OLED or 4K models. He insisted on more transparency before making such a large investment.

Staff, represented by Mr. Roell, responded by explaining that the current system was at the end of its life, and the replacement plan would include new wiring, cameras, speakers, televisions, and audio-switching equipment. He emphasized that the goal was to ensure reliability and future-proof the system, noting that the upgrades were based on feedback from a previous session and tailored to meet long-term needs. Additionally, a service-level agreement would ensure ongoing support. Roell also clarified that the board was not typically involved in the detailed specifications of such procurements, which are handled by staff under procurement policy.

Director Acton shared similar concerns to other board members, questioning whether a $240,000 investment was necessary and suggesting a $100,000 option could be explored. She also expressed doubts about whether the system could truly be future-proofed, noting that technology evolves rapidly. Acton asked if the board could consider models implemented by other regional districts to ensure the technology works and has a reasonable shelf life.

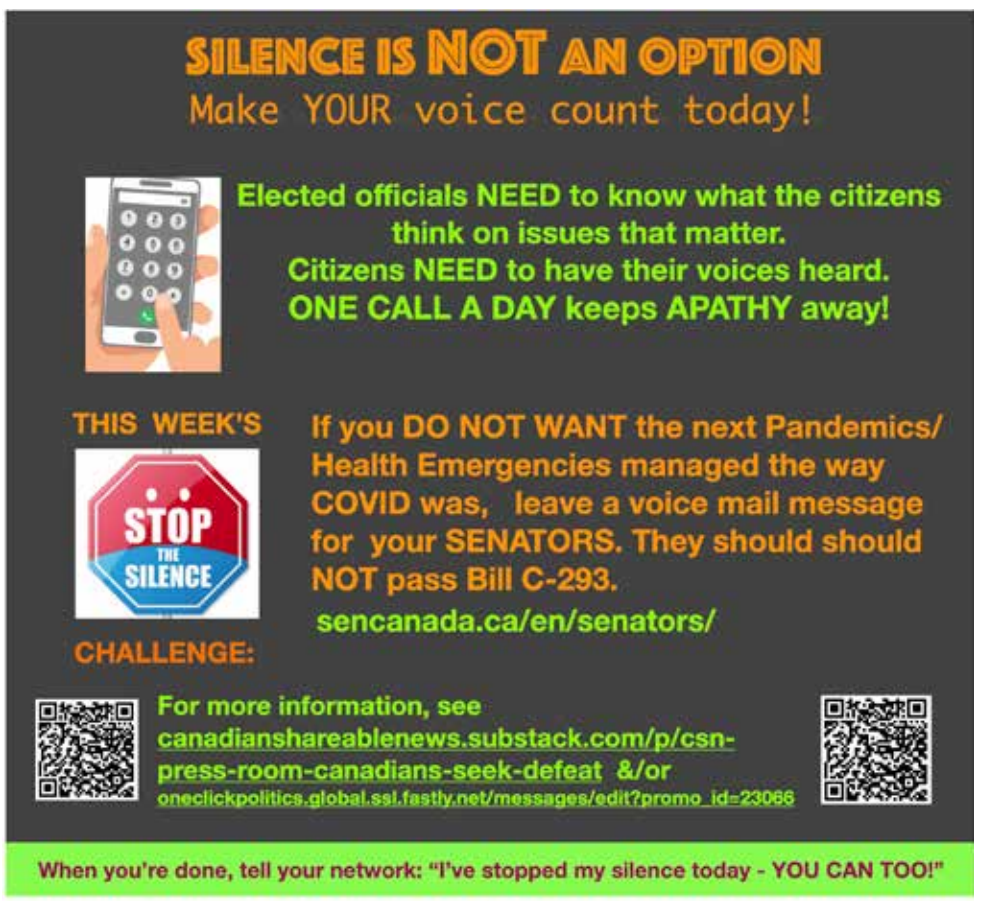
Director Staples spoke in favor of the upgrade, reflecting on her experience with technology improvements in her municipality. She warned against mid-range solutions, which had resulted in ongoing technical problems. Staples argued that the board should trust the staff's process, given the increasing demand for AV systems post-pandemic and rising costs. She emphasized that failing to invest properly could lead to higher costs in the long run, particularly in the form of ongoing technician fees to fix issues. While acknowledging the expense, she stressed that this investment was necessary for the board to function effectively and transparently.

Director McClinton agreed with Staples, likening the boardroom to a "Prime Minister's residence" where reluctance to invest had led to the building becoming unusable. He pointed out that improving the AV system was critical to the board's transparency and function, as it allowed the public to engage with meetings. He also raised the question about the system's expected lifespan and was informed that it would likely last five to seven years, with opportunities for expansion and upgrades.

Director Morrison added his voice in support of the upgrade, reminding the board that staff had done what was asked of them—designing a system that would meet the board's needs. He acknowledged the importance of balancing taxpayer money with functionality but trusted the staff's expertise and process. Morrison noted that opting for a lower-tier solution might result in lower reliability and longevity, which would be counterproductive in the long term.

Directors Wilson, Douglas, and Acton opposed the motion, citing concerns about the cost, transparency of the proposal, and the possibility of a less expensive alternative. While recognizing the need for upgrades, they were not convinced that the proposed expenditure was justified. Wilson, in particular, stressed the need for a more detailed breakdown of the costs involved before proceeding.

Throughout the meeting, concerns were raised about whether this level of expenditure was justified, but the conversation also acknowledged the importance of modernizing the technology to improve functionality and engagement with the public. The resolution was ultimately moved by Director McClinton and seconded by Director Sagall, with a vote anticipated after further discussion.



FAST, EFFICIENT, AND RISKY? BC ELECTIONS EMBRACE NEW TECH FOR 2024

“This innovation is designed to offer better service to voters across British Columbia,” stated Anton Boegman, the province’s chief electoral officer.

After a successful trial during the 2022 by-elections, Elections BC is rolling out digital voting machines for the upcoming general election on October 19. The new system replaces the traditional paper-based voter rolls with laptops, which will verify voter identities against digital databases. The goal, according to Elections BC, is to reduce wait times at polling stations to a maximum of five minutes.

In addition to speeding up the voting process, electronic tabulators will now handle ballot counting, reducing the need for manual labour after polls close. Elections BC estimates that 98% of votes—excluding mail-in ballots—will be reported within an hour of the polls closing. However, any recounts will still require manual processing to ensure accuracy.

Boegman remains optimistic that these technological improvements will encourage more people to cast their ballots. Voter turnout during the last election hit a record low of 53%, a troubling figure in an increasingly disengaged electorate. With no pandemic restrictions and a competitive race, Elections BC and political observers hope that turnout might improve this time around.

However, despite the promise of faster and more efficient elections, concerns remain. Elections security experts have long warned of the vulnerabilities that accompany the digitization of voting systems. According to a recent report from the Canadian Centre for Cyber Security, digital systems are highly susceptible to attacks, both foreign and domestic. “When it comes to digital voting systems, the possibility of interference—from data breaches to outright tampering—is a very real concern,” said a spokesperson from the centre. “We have to be vigilant in ensuring that public trust in the electoral process remains intact.”

Critics point to the risks of technical glitches, such as data corruption or software malfunctions, which could delay results or undermine public confidence. Issues like power outages or connectivity failures at polling stations could also impact the integrity of the voting process.

Moreover, digital systems introduce new vulnerabilities, particularly the threat of hacking or tampering. As elections across the world have demonstrated, public trust can easily be shaken by fears—real or perceived—of interference. With digital vote tabulation, transparency is key, but it can be difficult for the average voter to verify results in the same way they can with a hand count.

While Elections BC assures that recounts will still be done manually, some experts remain sceptical about the machines’ long-term impact on trust in the democratic process. A significant challenge will be to ensure that voters are confident in the accuracy and security of the results.

As advance voting begins on October 10, voters will have their first experience with this new system. The key question is whether these digital machines will live up to the promise of faster, more reliable elections, or whether they will introduce new complications in an already strained electoral system.
For now, British Columbians can only wait and see if this technological leap will help address the growing concerns about voter turnout and election security—or add to them.

LOGIC AND ACCURACY TESTING

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(24/05)

What is L&A testing?

Elections BC conducts logic and accuracy (L&A) testing to ensure tabulators count votes accurately.

When is L&A testing conducted?

All tabulators are tested before and after use.

The pre-use tests are conducted after candidate nominations close. The post-use tests are conducted after initial count and after final count.

How does L&A testing work?

1. A test set of ballots is prepared by Elections BC.
2. Wildcard ballots[1] are added to the test set by observers.
3. The expected outcome of the test set of ballots is determined.
4. The test set of ballots is inserted into the tabulator.
5. Tabulator behaviour is observed and confirmed to be as expected with all types of ballots, including rejected ballots and other exception cases (e.g., ballot without election official initials).
6. Results are tabulated and the results tape is printed and verified against the expected outcome to confirm accuracy.
7. All tabulator ports are sealed to prevent tampering, and the seals remain in place until the post-use test.
8. This process is repeated for each tabulator.

Who can observe L&A testing?

Candidates, candidate representatives and political party representatives are notified of the time and place where L&A testing will be conducted and they are encouraged to observe this process.

Quality assurance program

L&A testing is part of a larger quality assurance program. The quality assurance program also includes a hand count of the ballots from a randomly selected tabulator in every electoral district. This hand count demonstrates that the tabulators produced accurate results.

1. Wildcards are ballots marked at the time of the test based on random selections made by observers. This process ensures that the outcome of the test set of ballots is not known by anyone prior to the test.

ELECTIONS BC
A non-partisan Office of the Legislature



WONDROUS PONDER

Are we all made up of water?

I am certain you have heard that our body mass is composed mainly of water. That is scientists have reported the human body is composed of at least 97 % water (H20). In fact, it turns out we are not truly composed of such high water contents.

Moreover, on any given day the required water intake does indeed vary for any sex.

Men's water consumption differs from women. A body's need to consume this wondrous crystal clean natural resource is actually very different for any one individual. And the quantity varies even more in the aging human body, the older adult.

According to USGS.GOV , babies possess the most water in their wee little bodies however men have 60 % and women 55%. A breakdown of water in the body goes as follows: the brain has 75 % ; the blood is at 83 %; the heart contains 79 %; our bones are composed of 22 % water; our muscles have 75 % water within; the liver has 85 % water; the kidneys are to contain 83 % of the body's physical mass. Who knew?

Does this make sense?

Then of course there is the adage that claims women have more lipids (fatty tissue) for child barring which absorbs less water—I think? And so, as we age we gain more fatty tissue. Does that mean we lose more water from the body? Or do we absorb less and therefore are required to drink more water?

I once had a medical person suggest that by simply drinking anything such as coffee, tea or soda pop, the body would indeed get hydrated. In other words, this particular medical practitioner recommended I could increase moisture in the body through drinking any type of liquid over and above H-2-0. Really?

Well, doesn't a cup of java dehydrate the body?

What about a single spot of tea, isn't tea a diuretic?

Sugar drinks—would this type of liquid truly quench the body's thirst?

Certainly a cold drink of any type on a hot summer day tastes great! Even an ice cold barley brew seems to quench a person's thirst especially after playing an outdoor sport on a hot summer's day!

In recent research experts claim an aging body naturally releases less water; this would mean an older adult need not ingest 8 ounces of water (Eight, 8 oz. glasses/daily). And yet, there are still more experts who claim that given the multitude of changes in the aging human body, older adults would be wise to drink more water than the daily recommended amounts. Water not only hydrates but it also flushes unwanted elements from our internal organs!

H-2-0 therefore acts as a natural healing resource!

Alas, I leave you to ponder and perhaps even experiment with the aforementioned drinks and let this writer know what you come up with?

To be continued . . .

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We are happy to welcome one of our newest editress', Indigo, to the Westward Independent Newspaper. Indigo comes to us from Threee Thumbs Up! Everyday People servicing Older Adults living in the Cowichan Valley. *Where making a companion gets the job done! Indigo wants you to

know ThreeeThumbsUp@gmail.com is ready to drive, shop, pick-up and deliver, garden, offer exercise instruction in the home as well as anything dog-care for Older Adults and their friends in the Cowichan Valley region. To read more articles on lifestyle and feeling-good as we age, search Indigo's writings (@ThreeeThumbsUp) on www.Medium.com , Youtube and her odcast, Wellness TALKs.

Editorial disclaimer:

Thoughts expressed are of one writer's research and need not be intended as diagnoses, nor to be construed as professional medical advice for any human being or animal at any age. Always consult your preferred medical practitioner of choice for any health concerns.





IS IT COOL TO BE AN INDEPENDENT CANDIDATE IN 2024?

BC may see a record-setting number of independent candidates registered and running in the fall provincial election, and perhaps historical numbers elected, not necessarily due to the amalgamation of the BC United and BC Conservative Parties.



More than 1.5 million eligible BC voters did not vote in the 2020 election. Will the silent majority step forward in 2024?

Long before the recent bear hug between parties, the independent movement was underway, sparked in BC by a desire to educate and inspire the more than 1.5 million eligible BC voters, who were no-shows on voting day in 2020, to get interested in politics, at least in voting again. Salvatore Vetro, who founded Independent BC, a not-for-profit that recently closed its doors after a year and a half of educating BC voters, has been busy with a handful of volunteers, providing information and education to the public about how to nominate, support and vote for independent representation, getting non-voters engaged and inspired to become directly engaged in the political process again.

"British Columbia was founded and built on Independent Governance," says Salvatore. "After 120 years of party politics in BC, and such a low turnout on voting day in 2020, I felt voters in BC wanted another choice. It really concerned me that so many people in BC have given up on voting."

Despite examples of consensus governments including right here in Canada, where the Northwest Territories has a unique governance system characterized by a consensus-based approach that differs from the traditional party-based systems used in provinces, a shift in BC or any of the other provinces is a huge shift in culture.

But it isn't just Salvatore in BC who thinks a shift is possible and that Canadians are ready for change. On the other side of Canada Nova Scotia has also been educating their province, and with that election not scheduled until 2025, Peter Mac Issac, one of three directors at Independent Nova Scotia, is seeing every single community riding engage in the process.

"When the pebble goes into the pond the rings multiply and the rings go forever and that is what is happening right now in Nova Scotia," says Peter. "There will be big changes here with our Provincial election next year, count on it."

Mac Issac is confident by the time Nova Scotia holds its election, scheduled for the summer of 2025, all 55 ridings will have an independent candidate in the running. British Columbia and Nova Scotia may have very well become the bookends for political culture change in Canada, bringing the people back to the forefront of the political process and along with it more balance back to the Legislature, where the voices of Canadians may once again take precedence over the voice of lobby groups and third parties.

Is BC about to go back in time, and get a little closer to its roots, embracing representation with a more direct relationship with the community rather than the party? We will know soon enough if Canada has a true independent movement on its hands and a culture to create a playing field where the fence sitters will get back in the game. Salvatore and Peter believe the shift is here now, starting in BC.

The BC Provincial election is Saturday October 19th, 2024. For a list of candidates running in all ridings go to Election BC, Candidates.

Patricia Jecks. Freelance writer



RESPECT THE VOTE: WHY DESTROYING ELECTION SIGNS IS MORE THAN JUST MISCHIEF

David Evans from the Green Party and Marina Sapozhnikov from the Conservative Party find themselves standing side by side—but not in the way either of them likely imagined. Their election signs, vandalized with the faces cut out, now stand awkwardly together along the Malahat Highway.

While it's rare to see candidates from such different political backgrounds so close together, it's unfortunate that this connection comes through an act of senseless vandalism.

It's frustrating to think that during such a crucial election, people are destroying signs instead of engaging in meaningful dialogue. This isn't just about damaging property; it's an attack on the values of free speech and political participation that are at the core of our democracy. Candidates like Evans and Sapozhnikov have invested their time, energy, and personal finances into these campaigns, driven by their desire to serve the community. Destroying their signs isn't harmless mischief—it's a crime, and one that disrespects everyone involved in the democratic process.

This election season covers some of the most polarizing and critical issues of our time—homelessness, drug use, the skyrocketing cost of living, and more. Every party has its own approach to these problems, but at the heart of it, all candidates are working toward the same goal: what's best for their community. The divide isn't in the issues that need solving; it's in how we go about solving them. It's important to remember that political debate should be driven by respect, not intimidation or destruction of property. Vandalizing election signs doesn't just hurt the candidates—it threatens the integrity of our democratic process.

As a community, we need to hold vandals accountable and ensure that our elections remain safe, fair, and respectful spaces for everyone. Democracy thrives when we can discuss our differences civilly, without fear or hostility, and work together toward a better future.







CANDIDATE QUESTION AND ANSWER

With election day fast approaching, we've been eagerly awaiting responses from candidates in our local ridings. Weeks ago, we sent out questions to all the candidates in both the Cowichan-Malahat and Juan de Fuca-Malahat ridings. True to form, only two of them bothered to reply—and, no surprise, both are from the BC Conservatives.

John Koury, MLA Candidate for Cowichan-Malahat, and Dr. Marina Sapozhnikov, MLA Candidate for Juan de Fuca-Malahat, took the time to address our questions. As for the rest of the field? Crickets. It seems like if you're not voting Conservative, you might be voting for someone who can't even respond to an email.

1. Do you support the creation of the Office of Superintendent that will take the self-governance away from health care professionals? (Bill36)

Marina: Creation of the Office of Superintendent is part of Bill 36, and our Health Care platform is calling for repealing the Health Professions and Occupations Act (Bill 36) and thus removing the authoritarian political control imposed by the NDP government.

John: We are committed to repealing Bill 36. My Colleague Dr. Marina Sapozhnikov, will provide context and rationale in this edition.

2. What will you do to create a balance between private property rights and the rights of First Nations in future deliberations, especially after the BC Government implemented DRIPA?

Marina: While UDRIP can be used as a guiding principle for reconciliation with the First Nations, DRIPA creates tension between people and we do not support it. The principle of economic reconciliation proposed by BC Conservatives intends to create more opportunities for everyone.

John: Industry and economic development has ground to a halt for everyone in BC because of the uncertainty and arbitrary nature of DRIPA. BC is the only province that has adopted UNDRIP and the mass confusion that is a result has caused immeasurable harm, especially to small communities for lack of clarity and certainty on how to govern and how to do business. We will move forward with economic reconciliation with First Nations for the benefit of all British Columbian's.

3. How will you address the housing crisis alongside large immigration numbers in our province? How will you build the infrastructure needed to sustain current residents' needs while welcoming a growing immigrant population?

Marina: CPBC is calling for increased provincial control over immigration similar to Quebec. We are advocating for skilled immigration, stronger integration policies. We need to be able to accommodate people coming to the province, which includes housing, healthcare services and education, among others. The strain on building new housing will be reduced through removing regulatory burden, reducing cost of building materials with the ending of carbon tax and working with municipalities to expedite permitting process.

John: We will continue to legislate where possible and advocate to the federal government more power and control over immigration in BC to make sure labour market needs are met in the province (like Quebec) and that re-certification and integration is streamlined. We will cut unnecessary regulations to home building, reduce fuel taxes, and provide incentives to local governments to build homes faster through it's zoning and permitting procedures. I do not support the Duncan Slum Village model as a solution to the housing crisis the NDP/Green agenda has created. In addition, I will advocate that surplus Crown lands that can be identified close to our core communities be made for sale for new homes to be built upon.

4. The following text is quoted from BC Bill-44: "5. Section 464 is amended. (c) by adding the following subsection: (3) A local government must not hold a public hearing on a proposed zoning bylaw if:

(a) an official community plan is in effect for the area that is subject to the zoning bylaw, (b) the bylaw is consistent with the official community plan; (c) the sole purpose of the bylaw is to permit a development that is, in whole or in part, a residential development, and (d) the residential component of the development accounts for at least half of the gross floor area of all buildings and other structures proposed as part of the developments 6. Section 464 is amended by adding the following subsection: (4) A local government must not hold a public hearing on a zoning bylaw proposed for the sole purpose of complying with section 481.3 [zoning bylaws and small-scale multi-family housing]."

With public input being removed from local meetings regarding new builds within the UCB in local OCPs (Bill 44), would you amend this policy to restore community involvement, or do you defend this decision? If so, why?

Marina: Parts of Bill 44 are undemocratic and authoritarian, including the intent to prohibit holding public hearings. The BC Conservative Party commitment to working with the municipalities, not simply overriding their decisions is the right way to go forward. As our Party Leader John Rustad has stated in his interviews, we are planning to amend Bill 44 according to the principles of democracy.

The Conservative Party will work with local municipalities and incentivize them to create vibrant communities with well-maintained infrastructure, including roads, clean water and sewer, creating green spaces and reliable transportation, rather than force their hand to densify at any cost.

John: We are committed to amending Bill 44. I support public hearing bylaws for all zoning, re-zoning, and major development permit applications. I also support the autonomy of municipal bylaw decision-making. Elections have consequences and it's important for voters to check the skill sets for competency and track record of anyone vying for civic office.

5. The BC Infants Act has been a controversial topic since its introduction. The Act sets no minimum age for consent to medical procedures but excludes tattoos and other 'mature' rights. If elected, would you seek to amend the Act to introduce a minimum age—typically 16, as in other provinces—for consenting to medical procedures without parental approval?

Marina: Parents have the right and responsibility to protect their children, and must be protected when exercising those rights. As section 6.1.2 of the Conservative Party Policy declaration states:" Parents are the most important and significant factor in a child's upbringing, and as such must have a protected sphere, without beliefs and moral upbringing." I agree with the need to introduce the minimal age of consent. It will require a broad debate what the specific age would be.

John: I would advocate to affirm parental consent at a reasonable age for medical procedures for their kids. My colleague, Dr. Marina Sapozhnikov, expands on this in her reply.

6. If elected, how would you address youth substance abuse? Would you support judge-ordered detox or rehab? Many parents have lost children to drugs, as all treatments in BC are voluntary. Given that youths under the influence may not be capable of making informed decisions, would you support parents advocating before a judge to have their children detained for a set period for treatment?

Marina: CPBC supports focus on prevention, treatment and rehabilitation when dealing with drug addictions. We have been strong advocates for parental involvement in treatment of their children for drug addictions. Our plan will introduce voluntary and mandatory rehabilitation, giving those suffering from addiction an opportunity to get clean and rebuild their lives. There is a need to carefully balance personal freedoms with compassionate treatment, rather than leaving people to their own devices. These decisions should never be taken lightly and only considered as a last resort.

John: We support investing in treatment and recovery services, involuntary treatment where necessary to protect the public and individuals, and restoring mental health facilities as a means to end the destruction of human life people have to witness every day. We will end safe supply, harm reduction policies and human suffering on the streets just as fast as we can.

7. Glyphosate has been in the news in recent years, linked to an increased risk of non-Hodgkin lymphoma in several lawsuits. Recent verdicts have resulted in significant damages for plaintiffs, and ongoing settlements continue to address concerns about the herbicide's safety. Would you support a moratorium on spraying this chemical in our forests, as currently practiced by the forest industry and the provincial government? (You can read more here: www.wwind.ca/spraying-and-fires-in-bc/)

Marina: As part of the BC Conservative commitment to creating healthier habitats, we propose to stop all aerial spraying of Glyphosate. More information about our forestry and landscaping policy can be found on CPBC website.

John: We are committed to ending Glyphosate spraying.

8. Will you support the private sector partnering with First Nations wherein the island corridor lands can be owned and operated by a First Nations/Private sector company to create a functioning rail line again on the island?

Marina: As part of our commitment to economic reconciliation with the First Nations we'll consider various ways to create economic opportunities and collaboration, focusing on "people to people" connection. I view partnership between the private sector and First Nations through this lens. Creating a rail line will allow more environmentally responsible transportation and reduce road congestions. However, it will require large scale investment and thorough analysis of the demand for this service.

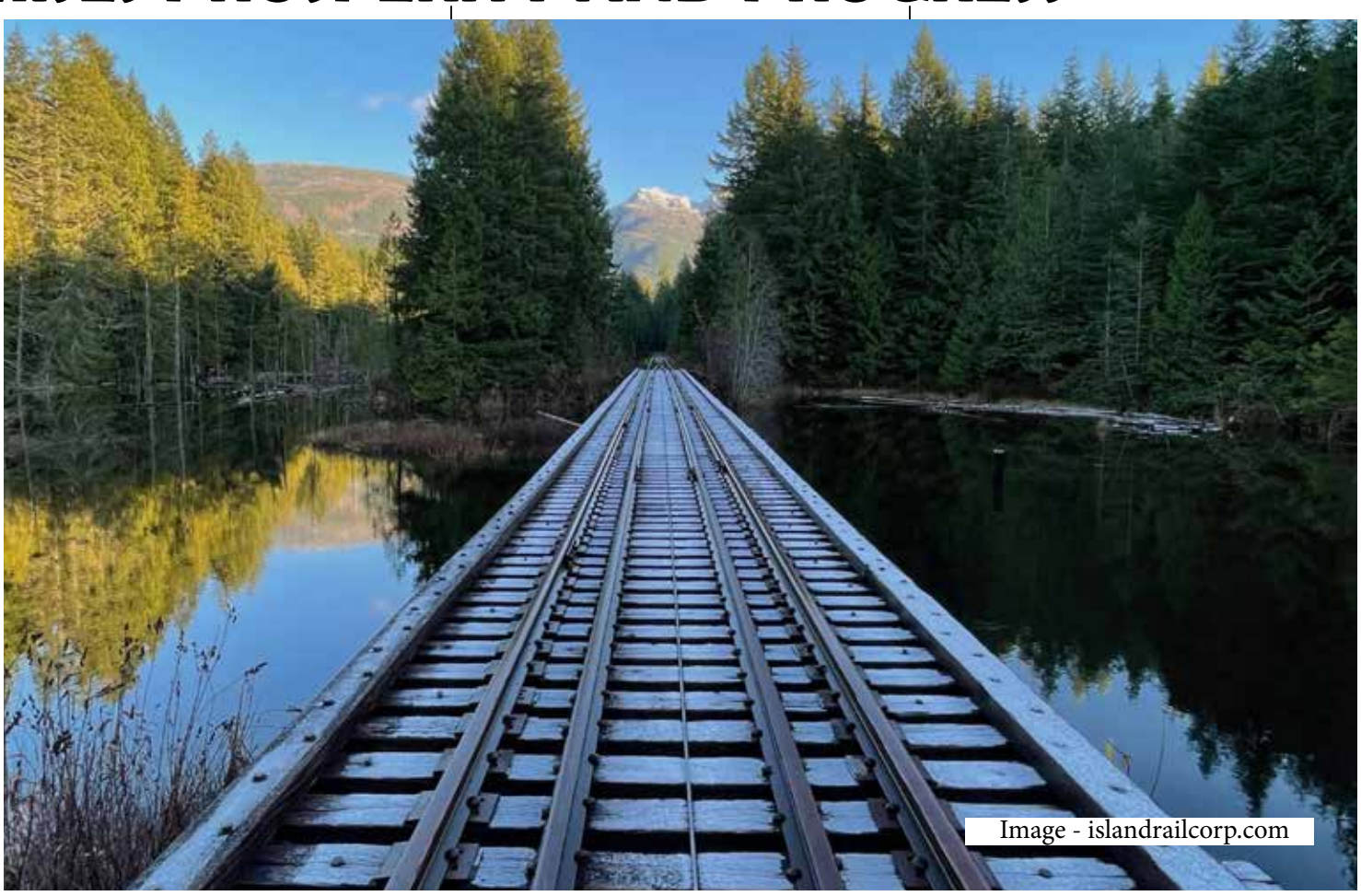
John: I support a viable rail link based on a business model that facilitates an industrial movement of goods and promotes residential and commercial mixed-use growth in all the communities along the line where restoration takes place. This is the model legacy the national railway was built upon and ought to continue. Restoring rail service today would by nature be widely consultative, over a billion dollars of investment, and a commitment to economic growth by local governments. Until such time there is a critical mass of business interest, private sector investment, and political will, the most important thing to do is preserve the rail bed itself until the stars align and work can begin to restore the railway.





ALL ABOARD: VANCOUVER ISLAND'S RAIL REVIVAL PROMISES PROSPERITY AND PROGRESS

Restoring the Vancouver Island Railroad is a topic on the minds of most Island residents. The dormant rail line runs across my backyard and I have waited for this time to come since the last train passed by many years ago.


Image - islandrailcorp.com

People are currently filled with excitement and nostalgia recounting the days when they travelled on the dayliner. Children were taken in school groups by train for an unforgettable day-long excursion where they travelled through areas that many had never seen before.

Not everyone speaks enthusiastically. Some voice concerns about the loss of the present trails that have informally been established along the line. Others raise the alarm that the costs will be far too high to justify the restoration. I have looked into some of the organizations involved and their plans for the future of the rail. I conclude that this is the most exciting and positive opportunity for Vancouver Island since the heyday at the turn of the last century.

Island Rail Corridor currently holds lands for five Regional Governments and fourteen First Nations Bands. Funds have been made available by the Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure for the Regional Districts involved to conduct Public reviews of the use of the rail corridor lands.

CVRD's "planyourcowichan.ca" website explains that the CVRD is working with Stantec {Global} Consultants. According to their website, Stantec is "a global leader in sustainable engineering, architecture and environmental consulting." They further claim "Today's communities transcend geographic borders. At Stantec, community means everyone with an interest in the work that we do - from our project teams and industry colleagues to our clients and the people our work impacts. The diverse perspectives of our partners and interested parties drive us to think beyond what's previously been done on critical issues like climate change, digital transformation, and future-proofing our cities and infrastructure"

CVRD states they are working with Stantec to "develop a process towards the development of a shared visioning" . I predict that the consultation process to develop a process and a vision will be very costly and will lead to further consultations requiring the need to hire further consultants to develop Action Plans. This will be time-consuming and could further delay the commencement of the needed upgrades to the corridor infrastructure.. The final Stantec report is supposed to include these key elements, "A comprehensive technical review of rail history, climate change resilience review, environmental constraint, land use planning, transportation and mobility planning, and business case."

They will also summarize findings and present a report and video to CVRD. The CVRD already produced one video about the rail that is on their website. Now tax money will pay for yet another one. This plan to pay a globalist Consulting company for such an extensive and expensive study that will only pertain to a total of 42,520 meters [26.4 miles] of the CVRD [publicly owned] rail appears to focus on broader land use planning and other issues well beyond the corridor.

I was anticipating having a dialogue with some of the CVRD directors about the restoration project when I attended their Public Information gathering on Saturday, September 14, 2024 behind the Duncan train station. I was unable to locate any of the directors, however I spoke to staff from the CVRD office. They directed me to the "planyourcowichan.ca" website and encouraged me to take their survey. They were eager to tell me that consultants will be releasing full reports sometime in 2025 and that would be the time to have my questions answered.

CVRD states on their website that the Island Corridor Foundation was established "for the purpose of owning and managing the rail corridor on Vancouver Island. ICF is the landowner of the corridor." ICF statements contradict this claim.

The Island Corridor Foundation was incorporated in 2004 and achieved charitable status. Please refer to their website for more details at "islandrail.com"

The Foundation acquired the former E and N corridor in 2006 when an Asset Donation Agreement was finalized seeing a tax credit issued to CPR for a significant amount of money. The ICF is not a railway operations company. It functions much like a landlord managing the lands and tracks but not the operations of the railway itself. Nanaimo has approximately nine miles of rail that has continued to provide industrial train service and is run by Southern Rail, [the operator.]

The Island Corridor lands are owned by the people and communities of Vancouver Island. The ICF website states "The Rail Corridor is an incredibly valuable asset owned by the people and communities of Vancouver Island." In bold letters they state "THAT MEANS IT'S YOURS'

The ICF website claims to "be on the verge of accomplishing a historic achievement." They are presently asking for public support in order to acquire Federal and Provincial funding to work on commuter rail service plans between Victoria and Langford. They state "as demand for commuter rail service grows over the next two decades the rail may extend northwards."

The ICF website also details their objectives to create trails and facilitate opportunities for parks, gardens, greenways and other public areas along the length of the corridor. The ICFs broad non-rail interests are of concern when public focus is on getting the railway back in service. I predict that there will be significant development

opportunities in the future and we currently have Economic Development Committees to explore business possibilities with investors. We also have plenty of environment, trail and park advocacy groups.

The ICF is a charitable Society and I was provided with a copy of their most recent financial statement. Their balance sheet needs to be reviewed by all to determine whether our trust should rest with this Foundation. They propose billion-dollar projects yet their financial statement reveals a staggering deficit. Will taxpayers be liable to repay the ICF debt?

I recently became aware of the Island Rail Corporation. Their mandate, vision statement and all the detailed information can be found on their website,

www.islandrailcorp.com

"Island Rail Corp [IRC] is a privately held corporation at the forefront of bringing together a consortium of local, national and international companies that can support Vancouver Islands vision to rebuild the Island Rail Corridor for future generations; all within the framework of Reconciliation with the First Peoples as our partners."

I recently met with Alex Stuart, former Mayor of Ladysmith and presently the Managing Director of IRC. I learned that The IRC executive team brings over 200+ years of knowledge and experience in the Railroad Industry. Dave Hayden, President of IRC alone brings 35 years in Senior Management positions with CPR. His responsibilities included managing budgets over one hundred million dollars.

I have learned a great deal from Alex. The IRC has been engaged in detailed and complex planning for the rails' future for over three years. The plans are well documented on their website. Contact information allows questions to be asked directly to the Corporate Executives.

IRC publicly recognizes that there are rail lands belonging to the 14 First Nations along the corridor and they are" First Partners" Several agreements with First Nations are already in place. The most recent agreement to be finalized is a Joint Venture Partnership with First Nations-owned West Marine Express for rebuilding the rail-marine leg of the railway. This project will link Vancouver Island Rail with Metro Vancouver utilizing custom-built barges and infrastructure. The IRC is in current talks and negotiations with over fifty Businesses, local interest groups and suppliers. A current list is on their website. Multiple MOUs [memos of understanding] have been signed with First Nations and the private sector to provide a wide range of materials and services required to complete the project.

IRCs clear vision recognizes that First Nations must be involved to guarantee the success of the project and the resulting prosperity for their People both socially and economically. Reconciliations through inclusion in planning, employment, business and development opportunities.is a cornerstone of the project. The First Nations will be 51% owners of the IRC. They will receive 51% of the profit with the IRC owning 49%. This profit-sharing arrangement will benefit First Nations communities and families well into the future.

The restored rail service will be comprehensive. Freight, passenger service and seasonal excursions for visitors are all part of the planning. Benefits include reduction of vehicles and transport trucks on the Island highways, relaxed travel with convenient schedules for commuting workers, shoppers and other riders, reduced vehicle emissions and decreased reliance on private vehicles and on oil and gas, reduction in wear and tear on the roads that lead to costly repairs and upgrades, increased public safety, trains offer more reliable travel even in extreme weather conditions. The destinations will also be linked up with transit routes, seasonal tourist buses and trail networks.

The mainstay of the economic benefits will be in the freight component. Port Alberni is a Federal Port and Vancouver Island is designated as a Foreign Trade Zone.. Plans are progressing to expand the Port Alberni terminal facilities to accommodate the increasing volume of domestic and international freight. Freight-rail service will streamline the movement of goods and alleviate congestion at Vancouver Port terminals. Service will also be restored and expanded along the corridor. The details are explained on the IRC website.

The IRC is a member of the Vancouver Island Economic Alliance and due to Vancouver Islands designation as a Foreign Trade Zone it is well situated to benefit directly from International Shippers. IRC and its principles are in discussions with the State of Nayarit, Mexico on several opportunities that will impact rail and technology licensing agreements.

IRC is committed to ensure that the project is environmentally friendly, the goal of reducing emissions is a priority. The first operational phase will showcase their intentions and ability to meet public expectations. The First Nations that own the Malahat Skywalk have requested that the first trains bring guests up to the Malahat. A plan is in place to showcase a Hydrogen train that will be met by shuttle buses linking the CRD up Island.

Once the first phase is operational the next phase will follow rapidly. Work will commence simultaneously at multiple locations to expedite the progress. Once complete, the entire infrastructure will have been replaced, upgraded and modernized including the port facilities.

The IRC website details its plan to pilot an Alsom "State of the Art" hydrogen-powered passenger train. The excitement is building as the public is now able to acquaint themselves with the progress made by IRC.

The restoration project will be primarily funded by the private sector. Some grants and Federal/ Provincial capital will be necessary but once the the rail is operational it will be profitable,

BC and Vancouver Island need this investment to regain prosperity and positive outlook for the future of all Island residents. The benefits will be extraordinary for First Nations and all residents

The BC Conservative Party Leader, John Rustad as well as The Nanaimo Airport Authority have publicly and unanimously shown support for both passenger and cargo.

We need to ask all candidates, "Will you support the Private Sector Partnering with First Nations wherein the island corridor lands can be owned and operated by a First Nations/Private sector company.

I conclude by saying, "we have waited for 20 years for this moment to arrive"

There's a new dawn of prosperity right here and right now..We all need to do our research then Get on Board.

Ruth Waddell







Dear WWIND,

Year after year, Duncan, B.C. Has the 39 DAYS OF JULY. This yearly festival only happens in Duncan, B.C. Canada and not anywhere else in the world. The man responsible for this fantastic venue is John Falkner, also known as Longevity John. He starts his work on preparing the 39 Days of July in November. Hours and hours of work in booking venues and the writing of a program directory that lists all the venue performers and times that they are performing. From the first day of the festival, he introduces all of the venues on the stages starting at noon each day and concluding at 10 pm each night. Duncan residents are happy to be able to see all of the great shows being performed and also our Duncan merchants are happy with the extra business they receive from the Duncan residents coming down to the downtown core. On August 31st of this year, John Falkner celebrated his 75th birthday at the City Square stage starting at 5pm with 5 venues being performed. Some Duncan residents gave small gifts to John and others gave birthday cards to this great man. There was something missing at his birthday party. There was no one from Duncan City Council there to present John with a birthday card, handshake, and a hug, for a public presentation on the City Stage in front of the viewing audience. Shame, shame, on the City Council for not taking the time to make an appearance wishing the hardest working man in the City of Duncan, the one and only John Falkner a happy birthday. The time has come that the City Council should take some courses to practice their public relations skills. Unbelievable!



Sincerely, J from Duncan

Dear WWIND,

Gabriola Sounder. (Cc BC Premier, Federal Finance Minister, Members of Finance Committee.) I wish to reference your September article titled "Phase 3 OCP/ LUB review would require $30K for Gabriola in 2025-26 Trust budget".

This article prompted me to attend the Gabriola Trust meeting on the next day in hopes of understanding why the Gabriola Island Trust thought it necessary to conduct a three Phase examination of our Official Community Plan (OCP) many of us worked so diligently to complete in late 1990, for little cost to the ratepayers. My first takeaway from this meeting was that the reason for this new and costly work was to amend the existing OCP, incorporating accommodations wanted by others than Gabriola ratepayers. This seemed demonstrated by what was said (I think there was an audio tape made) and most certainly by the formal designation of our Nanaimo Regional District Representative as a participant. Since it is the ratepayers of Gabriola that provide 100% of the budget for the Trust, this demonstrates an attempt to serve more than one master at the same time. My second takeaway is what I refer to as "Deferment Politics", a virus that is feeding off and destroying our democracy. This is not a meaningless abstract idea so I will use two examples to help readers connect the dots.

A few years ago, SNC Lavalin was facing criminal charges relating to the use of bribes to secure contracts. To escape accountability, they sought and got a "Deferred Liability Agreement" from our federal politicians, not from those appointed to have the laws of Canada respected and upheld. A second example of "Deferment Politics" is the record of investment practices by the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board (CPP IB). I use the CPP as a metaphor for the whole pension investment sector.

Starting in the first decade of this century I asked the Prime Minster, Finance Minster, Members of the Federal Finance Committee and the Superintendent of Canadian Financial Institutions to prohibit the CPP IB from investing in derivatives and using borrowed money to make new investments. In 2006 the Independent Auditor reported that the CPP IB was carrying "Investment Liabilities" of $775 million. By 2013 the entry had increased to $24,301 million or 31 times in about 7 years. But the pain of decision deferment did not end there. As of March 2024 total liabilities increased to a staggering $177,985 million, 330 times the amount in 2006. In 2024 the annual financing expenses were $5,927 million, up 176% from 2023 and taken from the CPP taxes paid by 22 million Canadian workers. The term "liabilities' is a forerunner for financial losses. This outcome of "Deferment Politics" could, should have been avoided but was not despite repeated pleas from myself and others (records available for specific requests).

So, the burning question is why and the only answer I have so far come up with is divided loyalties/interests being allowed to contaminate the decision-making of those elected to be our representatives in our democracy. Trying to serve more than one master only produces dithering and greater costs for the trusting public. The Islands Trust has the opportunity to get an objective endorsement by using a form of a referendum from Gabriola Island Ratepayers for the idea/need or not of a new OCP, by "coatailing" at the pending Provincial Election.

Paula Foot

Dear WWIND,

BC Minister of Finance Katrine Conroy, states that BC will have a record budget deficit and a rising debt of almost 129 BILLION, 1.1 BILLION higher than the forecast earlier this year, creating 344 MILLION more in interest payments!

She says that wildfire costs were 236 million higher than estimated. That is 21% of the 1.1 Billion over the estimated deficit. BC was warned last year that this would be a La Nina summer with hot dry weather.

Why didn't the NDP government put some large water bombers on call-out contracts for quick responses that would have extinguished the fires quickly instead of long costly firefights that are also very costly to our natural resources, environment and economy?

BC has one of the best aerial firefighting companies in the world with the largest volume bombers, Coulson Aviation, but they have to go to Australia and California for contracts while BC burns. One or two quick hits with one of these bombers in the early stages of fire puts out the fires immediately.

She also blames 638 million less in corporate income tax. It is her government that is driving corporations out of BC and making it harder and harder for companies to make profits in BC. Also she states that her government has 299 million less in natural resources but her own government, along with the federal government, seems to do everything in their power to stop the sustainable harvest of our natural resources, especially in the mining and petroleum sector.

Nowhere did she mention that part of the fault for the ballooning debt was the creation of an ever bigger, bloated government and all the perks (for them, not the taxpayer) that goes with it.

It is time for this inept, inefficient, ideologically driven government to go. Our healthcare system is broken and we are in debt to the point where our grandchildren will be paying off this spendthrift government's debt.

I, and many others, are disgusted with the state of BC. The government in power needs to step up to the plate and take responsibility for the mess our province is in.

John Walker, Cobble Hill

Dear WWIND,

It is time for David Eby to bow out like Joe Biden. Why?

David Eby has been on the TV news making many false statements about B.C. One is he said that he is the first Canadian premier to take a trip to the Middle East countries after Covid. WRONG. Jason Kenny, former Alberta premier was the first premier to take a trip to the Middle East after Covid.

Two is that David Eby says the NDP government eliminated the BC Medical Services billings that has saved BC employers millions of dollars. WRONG. The NDP had to find a solution of how to recover this large decrease of revenue to the government with the elimination of BC Medical billings. They created a new tax called the Employer Health tax which is a tax of 1.95% of an employer's total wage costs. Using the City of Vancouver as an example, the City of Vancouver paid out $4 million dollars per year to BC Medical. These amounts were added on to the employee's gross wages as a taxable benefit. In the first year of this new tax, the City of Vancouver now had to pay $9.5 million dollars to the government. An increase of $4.5 million dollars or a 137% increase. Just an NDP cash grab. Now the City of Vancouver has to increase the property taxes to recover this expense. This tax also affects all of us when we are going shopping, banking, ETC. We all have to wait in line because there are not enough cashier lines open. This is because the employer has to save money from the tax on wages. Do not blame the merchants. Blame your David Eby government. This tax is also the reason for so many self-serve checkout counters. David Eby does not know the difference between a debit and a credit. Very sad. There was no need for this Employer Health Tax. What should have been done was to keep the BC Medical Services billing as is and just lower our income tax rates.

Three is that David Eby says BC has the largest GDP growth of all of the provinces. WRONG. BC sits in 4th place when it comes to GDP growth.

Fourth David Eby says BC has the lowest unemployment rate of all the provinces. WRONG. BC sits in 4th place when it comes to the lowest unemployment rate. These are very serious statements coming from the Premier of BC. David Eby is a professional lawyer and you would think that he would do his research before making false statements to BC residents. Totally unsatisfactory from a Premier. Unbelievable!

Joe Sawchuk,

COME OUT AND SUPPORT YOUR FELLOW FARMERS!

Oct 26, 2024

Land Keepers Society

GALA

Fundraising Dinner & Dance

Entertainment, Speakers, Silent Action!

Live Band!

THE HIT LIST



COWICHAN GOLF & COUNTRY CLUB
5:30 Bar opens 6:30 Dinner 8:00 Dance

$150

Semi-formal Dinner Service!

Buy your tickets online or call 587-991-5452
www.landkeeperssociety.org

CAUGHT IN THE ACT: BC ASSESSMENT'S SECRET TIES TO A LOBBYIST GROUP

BC Assessment denied that it is a paying member of a registered organization (the UDI) on the BC Lobbyists Registry. However, the evidence shows otherwise. The UDI represents the interests of its corporate members that profit from development and real estate.

By Sasha Izard, Sept 28, 2024.

In November of 2023, the Urban Development Institute (UDI), a registered organization on the BC Lobbyists Registry, that offers political influence to its paying corporate member companies that profit from development and real estate – took to hiding its members directory from the general public, after issues involving public perceptions of conflict of interest had led to more than one local government withdrawing their memberships in the organization that year. Listed on the UDI's members directory were not only hundreds of corporate members involved in development and real estate, but also branches of government including Local and Regional Governments, Crown Corporations, and Provincial statutory entities – something that had raised numerous eyebrows in the public and led to pushback from them. The Federal Crown Corporation the CMHC pulled its UDI membership, as well in 2023. Although the UDI pulled down its members directory and took to hiding it from the public, a backed-up copy of the directory had already been made, as to some it had become apparent that a pull-down was not only likely, but imminent.

The initial pull-down of the directory took place in November by the UDI taking their branch websites down and not reposting the directory on their new website UDI.org. A secondary pull-down of the directory took place in January almost immediately after it was revealed on the radio that the members directory could still be viewed through a third party website that collated membership data for the UDI. At the time of the initial pull-down, the Provincial Housing Bills (44-47) were being pushed through the BC Legislature in late November 2023. The relation between its contents and what the UDI had lobbied the Province on was being exposed. Also, at the same time, yet another municipality: the Township of View Royal saw elected officials unanimously deciding to withdraw their District's paid membership with the UDI, after it became apparent that their district had joined it not only without a vote by elected officials, but without elected officials even having been informed of the decision to join. To the UDI their members directory had become a liability. It disappeared from public view and has not returned since.

Since then, more branches of government have discontinued their paid memberships from the lobbyist organization, but still many also continue their paid memberships with it, almost always not informing the public of that status. To find what branches of government are still members of the lobby takes a bit of cat and mouse to determine. Nothing better has demonstrated that so far, than the case of the Provincial Crown Corporation BC Assessment.

On August 29, I sent the following question to BC Assessment: "Hello BC, Assessment, I would like to know if BC Assessment is still a paying member of the Urban Development Institute (UDI)."

2 days later on August 19, I received a response from an Assessment Administrator from BC Assessment: "Hello Sasha, Thank you for contacting BC Assessment. I have confirmed that we are currently not a member of the Urban Development Institute. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact us. Thank you,"

I responded: " Hi, Thank you for letting me know. At what date did BC Assessment's membership with the Urban Development Institute expire?"

I received a prompt response from the administrator: "Hi Sasha, I was not given further detail other than BC Assessment is not currently a member with UDI. We have created a request for the appropriate staff to contact you and discuss this further."

I then received a response from a Deputy Assessor from BC Assessment the next day: "Hello Sasha, If you have any further questions regarding your inquiry, they can be directed to me. Regards,"

I responded: "Hello, Thank you for contacting me. My question is: At what date did BC Assessment's membership with the Urban Development Institute expire?"

The Deputy Assessor responded: "Hi Sasha, Can I ask what the relevance of your question is?"

Asking for the relevance of my question is something that I have seen many times from government staff through email inquiries and often indicates that I will not receive a further response from the government staffer. It appears to me to be a screening question. If I said that I worked for development and real estate or for the UDI, would I have received a similar response? I responded: "It is a question from a member of the public to a public institution and as a question it is relevant.

No response was forthcoming as expected. I was not expecting a response, having experienced previously what seems to be standard government operating procedure toward the public when relevant questions are asked. I quickly made an FOI request to BC Assessment (registered on Aug 23) for the following information: 1. Date at which the decision was made to discontinue, or terminate BC Assessment's membership with the Urban Development Institute (UDI). 2. Any communications at BC Assessment that shows how and why this decision was made and who was responsible for the decision and how that decision was made. 3. The date at which the membership was ended. 4. The year that BC Assessment began to pay the UDI for membership and also communications, or other data showing the reasons and those responsible for that initial decision.

On September 27, 2024, I received the FOI response. The FOI response included a number of annual renewal invoices and a single receipt. It also contained a few brief emails about payment. The text that accompanied the response however, reminded me of the malfunctioning computer HAL in 2001: A Space Odyssey. HAL-like responses are not unusual for responses to inquiries made to government in general, but this one seemed to take the cake in the strangeness department, already an area for stiff competition: "To further assist with the Request, we provide the below noted information: "BC Assessment reimburses employees for their membership with the Urban Development Institute (UDI) BC Assessment has not made a decision to discontinue or terminate reimbursing employees for UDI memberships We were unable to locate the "year" that BC Assessment began to reimburse employees for UDI memberships The oldest invoice BC Assessment has in relation to reimbursing a UDI membership is from 2018,

however, we understand BC Assessment reimbursed employees for UDI memberships prior to 2018.

I responded: "Hi, I have difficulty understanding this. Do you mind explaining it?" and: "In the FOI package it gives a receipt for an invoice # DUES000452 2024-04-02 Membership Renewal, however the invoice is not included in the FOI. Why is that?"

What they were telling me made no sense to me. I have never heard of employee memberships in the UDI, much less so: reimbursements for them. Memberships for the UDI are corporate rather than personal, and the attached invoices confirmed that these were corporate membership renewals. If BC Assessment employees were being reimbursed for memberships in the UDI, why did this not show up on the invoices and/or receipt? "BC Assessment has not made a decision to discontinue or terminate reimbursing employees for UDI memberships"

This did not answer my question. I had requested to know if BC Assessment discontinued its membership with the UDI. There was no indication of this in the FOI. The receipt of payment for their latest renewal was dated to April 2, 2024, thus indicating that BC Assessment is currently still a member of the UDI. The following was just puzzling, if not alarming to read: "We were unable to locate the "year" that BC Assessment began to reimburse employees for UDI memberships". The oldest invoice BC Assessment has in relation to reimbursing a UDI membership is from 2018, however, we understand BC Assessment reimbursed employees for UDI memberships prior to 2018.

I emailed again to the Assessment Administrator from BC Assessment that I had initially conversed with through email: "Hello, I have documentation from Freedom of Information that shows that BC Assessment is indeed a current paying member of the UDI. Where did you get your information that BC Assessment is "currently not a member of the Urban Development Institute?".

So there it stands. While BC Assessment had previously informed me that they are not currently a member of the UDI, the receipt from this year revealed otherwise. Nothing in the FOI showed that BC Assessment had discontinued its membership with the UDI, directly contradicting what it had told me previously about its membership status.

Conclusion: BC Assessment is still a member of the Urban Development Institute, despite it's claims that it is not. Why is the Provincial Crown Corporation so reticent to come clean on the issue of its membership with the UDI? Without an answer, one is only left to speculate. I think that the answer might have to do with BC Assessment's policy of what they call "highest and best use". The policy of highest and best use could be seen to have the effect of nudging property owners to maximize the density on their properties, including through subdivisions, or perhaps more likely to sell their lots, as their taxes are raised according to the process of land-lift (and even the potential for land-lift), and the gentrification it brings – thus in a feedback loop pushing the densification of communities even further.

With such low density properties e.g. single family homes coming up for sale, the properties can then be purchased on the market by developers and speculators, including investment pools such as Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs) further driving the financialization of the housing stock and continuously driving upzoning and land prices in the process, making housing less and less affordable in terms of square meter cost to those who need it.

The developers/investors with their purchased housing stock could then merge properties, upzone, and develop to higher densities and heights, which while providing them with potentially astronomical profits, make the housing for the community-already-there, less and less affordable with the once again increasing land-lift.

With an increasing ownership of the share of housing stock, REITs, various corporations and other big holders of the housing stock, can then apply a cartel-like hold on housing prices and rental prices, something that has been observed, including in the form of "rent-fixing" including involving the use of algorithm-based/artificial intelligence software to do so.

For BC Assessment to be a paying member of an organization that has consistently lobbied the same government on behalf of its paying corporate members that profit from development and real estate; for policies for upzoning and increasing densification, then the policy of "highest and best use" that has an effect of driving these, at the expense of individual property owners and through passing added costs on to renters, could be seen as a clear conflict of interest.

It could be seen as the Provincial Crown Corporation operating against the public interest by advancing specific corporate profit-driven interests, while in addition refusing to tell the same public the truth about its membership status with a registered organization on the BC Lobbyists Registry that advances to government those same corporate interests.

This story will continue to evolve as more information is revealed. You can read more from Sasha at: crdwatch.ca





ADVANCE VOTING PLACES

ELECTORAL DISTRICT	VOTING PLACE NAME	VOTING PLACE ADDRESS	VOTING PLACE CITY	DATES OPEN
COWICHAN VALLEY	COWICHAN COMM CENTRE	2687 JAMES ST	NORTH COWICHAN, BC	THU-SUN OCT 10-13 TUE-WED OCT 15-16
COWICHAN VALLEY	CROFTON COMM CENTRE	8104 MUSGRAVE ST	CROFTON, BC	SAT-SUN OCT 12-13
COWICHAN VALLEY	LAKE COWICHAN CENTENNIAL HALL	309 SOUTH SHORE RD	LAKE COWICHAN, BC	THU-FRI OCT 10-11
COWICHAN VALLEY	ROYAL CANADIAN LEGION BRANCH 191	9775 CHEMAINUS RD	CHEMAINUS, BC	TUE-WED OCT 15-16

VOTING DAY PLACES - OCTOBER 19

ELECTORAL DISTRICT	VOTING PLACE NAME	VOTING PLACE ADDRESS	VOTING PLACE CITY
COWICHAN VALLEY	BENCH ELEM SCHOOL	1501 COWICHAN BAY RD	COWICHAN BAY, BC
COWICHAN VALLEY	COWICHAN COMM CENTRE	2687 JAMES ST	NORTH COWICHAN, BC
COWICHAN VALLEY	COWICHAN TRIBES DINING HALL	5574 RIVER RD	DUNCAN, BC
COWICHAN VALLEY	CROFTON COMM CENTRE	8104 MUSGRAVE ST	CROFTON, BC
COWICHAN VALLEY	HALALT FIRST NATION GYM	7973 CHEMAINUS RD	NORTH COWICHAN, BC
COWICHAN VALLEY	HONEYMOON BAY COMM HALL	10022 PARK DR	HONEYMOON BAY, BC
COWICHAN VALLEY	LAKE COWICHAN CENTENNIAL HALL	309 SOUTH SHORE RD	LAKE COWICHAN, BC
COWICHAN VALLEY	PENELAKUT BAND OFFICE	11330 CLAM BAY RD N	PENELAKUT ISLAND, BC
COWICHAN VALLEY	QUEEN OF ANGELS SCHOOL	2085 MAPLE BAY RD	NORTH COWICHAN, BC
COWICHAN VALLEY	ROYAL CANADIAN LEGION BRANCH 191	9775 CHEMAINUS RD	CHEMAINUS, BC
COWICHAN VALLEY	THETIS ISLAND COMM HALL	292 NORTH COVE RD	THETIS ISLAND, BC
COWICHAN VALLEY	VIMY COMM HALL	3968 GIBBINS RD	NORTH COWICHAN, BC
COWICHAN VALLEY	YOUBOU COMM HALL	8550 HEMLOCK ST	YOUBOU, BC
COWICHAN VALLEY	ÉCOLE MOUNT PREVOST SCHOOL	6177 SOMENOS RD	NORTH COWICHAN, BC

