
Spring Update from Teale!

1 message

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A Spring Update from Teale

Friends,

The cherry blossoms have almost run their course and the daffodils are in full bloom - spring has arrived in Saanich! It has been a very busy spring, so much so that I have not had an opportunity to share a recent update. There are a ton of things to get to, so let's dive in!

Before I do, a very important reminder. As you know, a federal election has been called for April 28th. Please make your plan to vote on or before Election Day. You can learn more about polling locations, dates for advanced polls, and other important information on the [Elections Canada website](#).

Saanich Updates

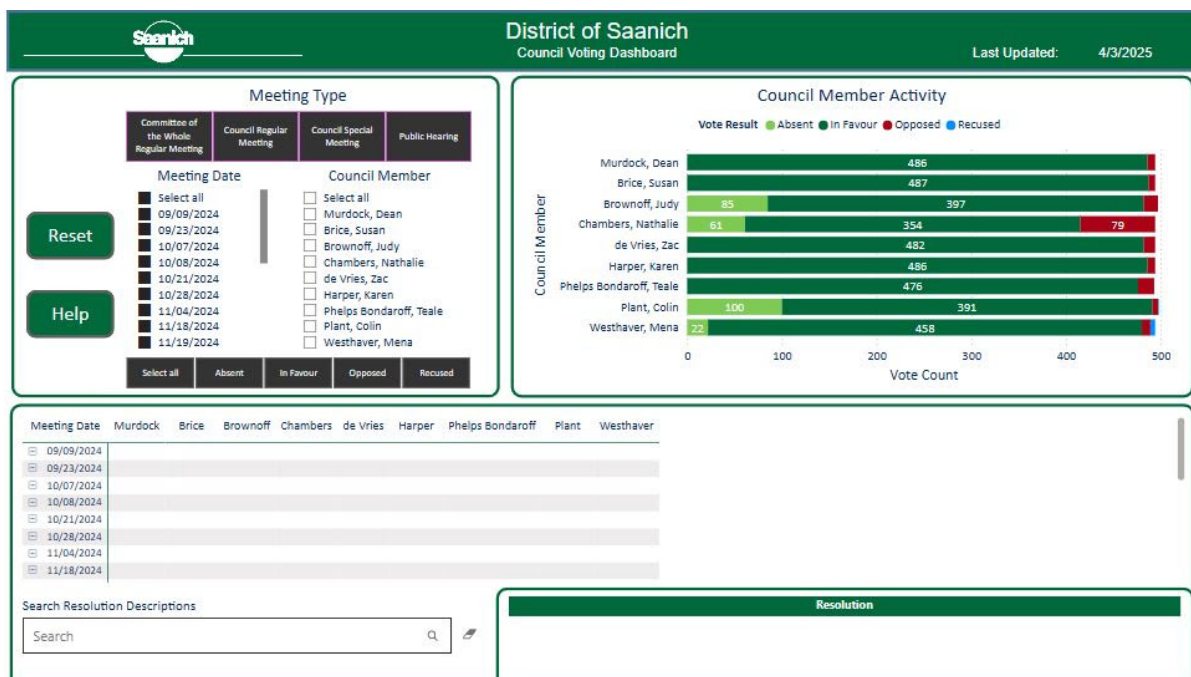
Saanich Council has been busy working on a wide range of issues and it's budget season, so there is much to report. I won't possibly be able to cover everything, but as always, if you ever have any questions about what is happening in the District, you can find more information on the [Saanich website](#), on [Hello Saanich](#), and you can always [reach out by email](#) with a specific question. Here is some recent news:

- **Saanich is Awesome!** You probably already knew this, but it's nice to get some external validation. For the third year in a row, the District has been recognized as one of [BC's Top Employers for 2025](#). Learn more from the [Saanich News](#) and the [District's](#) media release. And the view from the top of Mount Tolmie was recently voted among the [most beautiful views in Canada!](#)
- **Quadra McKenzie Plan:** One of the largest items handled by Council this spring was the draft Quadra McKenzie Plan (QMP). This plan presents a vision for the next 20-30 years that looks to address the climate and housing crises and lays the foundation for creating healthy communities that feature a diversity of housing options, active transportation infrastructure, vibrant public spaces, and services and amenities within walking distance for residents in and along Quadra and McKenzie.

We received extensive feedback on many aspects of the draft plan, and Council has directed staff to: Revise the Draft Plan land use framework, with a focus on reducing density in the Quadra North area; defer any modification of McKenzie Avenue vehicle lanes and specific transit priority measures to a future process in consultation with BC Transit; and bring a revised Draft Plan to Council for another check-in, before launching another round of public engagement.

Thank you to everyone who participated in the numerous consultation opportunities around this plan. To everyone who wrote in, thank you. I did get an opportunity to read your emails, though I was not able to reply to everyone. Stay tuned, and check [Hello Saanich](#), to learn about additional consultation opportunities.

- **New Voting Dashboard!** Keeping track of Saanich Council decisions and learning how each individual councillor is voting on the issues has never been easier. Saanich recently [launched a new voting dashboard](#) that will increase transparency by making it easy for folks to know how individual Councillors voted on specific topics at specific meetings. There are a bunch of cool visualization tools as well. You can [find the dashboard here](#).



- **Elbows Up 🍁** When it comes to international trade, things have been getting very strange lately, and it has been worrying to see the worsening situation with US tariffs and trade. In light of this situation, Saanich Council recently voted unanimously to authorize staff to buy local whenever possible for goods and services under \$75,000. You can learn more from this [Times Colonist](#) article.
- **Climate Report Card:** While the District has been working hard to achieve our ambitious climate targets, our [2024 Climate Plan Report Card](#) revealed that there is still much work to be done. Our target is to cut community greenhouse gas emissions in half by 2030 and reach net zero by 2050. And for the corporation of Saanich, the goal is to reduce emissions by 50% in 2025 and achieve net zero by 2040 (from 2007 baselines for both targets).

We are working hard to achieve these targets and a number of recently initiated projects should begin to make an impact very soon. However, there is still much work to be done. When you hear me speaking about the importance of fully funding staff positions to expeditiously implement our [Road Safety Action Plan](#), [Biodiversity Conservation Strategy](#), and [Urban Forest Strategy](#), know that one of the driving motivators behind this is my desire to see us getting closer to achieving our climate targets. Learn more from this [Times Colonist](#) article.



I had the honour to be invited to the local Scout community's annual Baden Powell Dinner.

- **More Childcare Spaces in Saanich:** The District has a severe shortage of childcare spaces and Council has been working hard to address this pressing need in a couple of ways. First, we recently amended District bylaws to increase the number of children permitted in licensed home-based care up to 12. The number was previously limited to five children in homes in multi-unit buildings and up to eight in single and two-family dwellings. Learn more from [this Times Colonist](#) article. The District also just put out a request for expressions of interest for organizations that could establish a daycare facility at 5500 Hamsterly Road. [Learn more here](#), and please share with anyone who might be

interested.

- **Infrastructure and Capital Works:** If you are interested in learning more about capital works in the District, we recently released our [Capital Works Projects Guide](#). This is a reference document for the public about major Saanich projects scheduled throughout the year. [Learn more here](#). I'm pleased to say that some of these projects will be completed with the help of \$3.8 million in funding from the Government of Canada's Canada Community-Building Fund (CCBF). [Learn more here](#), and from this [Cycling Magazine article](#).

Last year, Saanich adopted an updated [Active Transportation Plan](#). The plan outlines the ways in which the District will improve active mobility, including walking, biking, rolling, and riding the bus for people of all ages and abilities. Given the importance of active transportation, Council asked staff to report back on ways in which we could accelerate the implementation of this plan. In early March, staff reported back and unfortunately, the report noted that inflation and raising costs would mean that far from accelerating implementation, increased funding would be required just to stick to a 15 year timeline.

At our February 10th meeting, I pushed to increase funding to at least cover the cost of inflation moving forward, and expressed concerns that without such funding we risk punting the implementation of a complete and connected network further and further away. Council ultimately decided to receive the staff report. The result is that the projects outlined in the Active Transportation Plan will still go ahead, but we can expect a ~5 year delay in plan completion based on current strategies and funding levels. You can find the staff report, supplementary information, and meeting minutes [here](#). And you can learn more from stories by [CHEK News](#) and in the [Times Colonist](#).

In February, I had the pleasure of attending the Federation of Canadian Municipalities' (FCM's) [Sustainable Communities Conference 2025](#) in Fredericton. It was an excellent opportunity to connect with colleagues and professionals from across the country and to learn about a wide range of sustainability measures. I attended a number of informative sessions, including panels and talks on public transportation electrification, justice and sustainability, reconciliation, and more.



Sharing information about Saanich's e-bike incentive program with folks working on transportation electrification.

I also had the honour to receive, on behalf of the District, a [FCM Sustainable Communities Award](#), for our very successful e-bike incentive program. Not only has this program helped over 380 Saanich residents access e-bikes, but it was so successful that the province modelled the provincial e-bike incentive off of Saanich's. You can learn more about [our program here](#). For those who are interested in metrics and detailed numbers, UBC's REACT Lab has run the numbers, which you can [find here](#) ⚡🚲



Receiving a Sustainable Communities Transportation Award from FCM on behalf of the District, for our e-bike incentive program.

This week, I'm heading up to Nanaimo to attend the annual [Association of Vancouver Island and Coastal Communities \(AVICC\) AGM and Convention](#). Saanich has two resolutions [in the agenda](#), both of which I helped draft. The first calls on the province to enshrine the [BC Coastal Marine Strategy](#) into law (submitted jointly with Langford), and the second calls on the province to develop a coordinated province-wide strategy to address the root causes of feral rabbit abandonment. Watch my social media for updates from the road.

Family Doctors in Saanich



I know that like me, many of you do not have a family doctor or you have friends and family members who do not have a family doctor. There is a severe family doctor shortage in the District of Saanich and more needs to be done!

I am currently working with members of the community and medical professionals to push for solutions to this problem. We are in the process up setting up a group of folks who can explore and advocate for solutions to this growing problem. If you are interested in getting involved, please get in touch. No advocacy experience is needed! We are looking from folks from all walks of life to help us fight for more doctors in the District. [Please email me to get involved \(hello@teale.ca\)](mailto:hello@teale.ca).

Reproductive Justice Advocacy



The past couple of months have been packed with great reproductive justice news! At the start of April, the AccessBC Campaign celebrated the [2nd anniversary](#) of free prescription contraception in BC!

The success of this policy is clear from the significant increase in prescription contraception use in BC since its implementation. Between April 2023 and December 2024, the Ministry of Health reports that 306,000 people were able to access free prescription contraception (including emergency contraception).

UBC researchers examining the policy's impact found that in the first 15 months of the program, the number of people in B.C. using any form of prescription contraception increased by 10%. This research also found that of the 80,200 people who accessed long-acting reversible contraceptives (LARCs) through the program, at least 11,400 of them would not have been able to access these contraceptives had the government not made prescription contraception free!

You can learn more from our [2nd anniversary statement](#).



As you know, in fall 2024, Bill C-64, the national pharmacare plan was adopted, a plan that will make prescription contraception and diabetes medication and supplies free across Canada. The next step in the process to making this a reality is that each province needs to sign an agreement with the federal government, and the [AccessBC Campaign](#) has been pushing hard to make this a reality and lock in this critical policy across the country.

I am so excited to say that three provinces and one territory have now signed agreements. Things were moving very quickly before the federal writ, so here's the breakdown:

- **Manitoba** took the lead [signing an agreement on February 27th](#). The agreement will see \$219 million over four years to provide universal coverage to a range of contraceptive, diabetes, and menopause hormone therapy (MHT) – also known as hormone replacement therapy (HRT) – in Manitoba. You can learn more from [this government press release](#), and news stories in the

[Globe and Mail](#), [CBC](#), [Global News](#), [Radio Canada](#), [CTV News](#), and the [Coastal Reporter](#). The program starts in June 2025.

- **British Columbia** previously signed an MOU with the federal government in September, and formally reached an [agreement over pharmacare on March 6th](#). This will see \$670 million over four years to cover similar medications and supplies. You can learn more from [this government press release](#), and news stories in the [Times Colonist](#), [HR Reporter](#), [Radio Canada](#), [My Cowichan Valley Now](#), [the Globe and Mail](#), [CBC News](#), and [Global News](#). This program will begin in March 2026.
- **P.E.I** signed an agreement on March 7th! This agreement will see \$30 million over four years to cover similar medications. Learn more from [this government press release](#), as well as news stories in [The Guardian](#), [CBC News](#), the [Times Colonist](#), and [the Globe and Mail](#). The program will start May 1, 2025.
- **Yukon** signed an agreement of March 20th! This agreement will see \$9.5 million over four years to provide universal access to contraceptive and diabetes medications for residents of the Yukon. The funding from this agreement will also improve access to diabetes devices and supplies. Learn more from [this government press release](#), as well as news stories from [CBC News](#), [Yukon News](#), and [The Globe and Mail](#). The program will start no later than January 2026.

Negotiations between provinces and the government seem to have paused during the election, but come April, we will be once again working hard with our [amazing sister campaigns](#) to get more provinces and territories on board. This is enormous news and we are overjoyed to see this level of progress across Canada.



In March, AccessBC Campaign co-founder Devon Black and I were awarded [King Charles III Coronation medals](#) for our work fighting for free prescription contraception and reproductive justice. In 2017, Devon and I founded the AccessBC Campaign, and we have been working hard ever since to make universal no-cost prescription contraception a reality in BC.

The medals commemorate the coronation of His Majesty King Charles III as King of Canada, and it is awarded to people who have “made a significant contribution to Canada or to a particular province, territory, region or community of Canada, or have made an outstanding achievement abroad that brings credit to Canada.”

I am very proud of what our small grassroots campaign has been able to achieve, and honoured to receive this award. It’s hard to believe that a kitchen table conversation between friends could lead to a successful province-wide campaign, and now a national movement for free prescription contraception. This award belongs to all the volunteers on the AccessBC campaign, whose dedication made free prescription contraception a reality in BC. Their hard work and passion made all the difference and I am grateful to have worked alongside such an inspiring group of people.

At a time when we see reproductive rights being eroded around the world, I am proud that BC continues to be a beacon of hope for reproductive justice. There is still more work to be done, and we will continue to fight to remove barriers and expand reproductive freedom here in BC and across the country.

You can watch highlights from the awards ceremony here: [Devon](#) and [Teale](#). And read more from the [Westerly News](#), [Saanich New](#), and AccessBC Campaign [press release](#).

Ways You Can Help!



If you are like me, you are likely getting worried about the erosion of reproductive rights and the undermining of reproductive justice in Canada and around the world. There are a number of things you can to do to help!

First and foremost, a federal election is underway, and while the discourse is being dominated by prominent and pressing international relations and trade issues, it is vitally important that folks do not lose sight of other important issues as the consider who to vote for on April 28th. My friends at the Abortion Rights Coalition of Canada recently released their [2025 Election Toolkit](#). This includes information on what each of the parties have [done for reproductive rights](#), questions you

can ask candidates, petitions, and more. Please don't forget about reproductive justice when you go to the ballot box!

The AccessBC Campaign is also recruiting volunteers! We are always looking for help, but in particular, we currently need folks to help out with social media and fundraising efforts. If you are interested, [please get in touch](#). Our [sister campaigns](#) across Canada are also looking for support, so if you are outside of BC or have friends outside of BC, please connect with a local campaign.

If you do not have the capacity to volunteer, [please donate what you can](#). We are gearing up for post-election advocacy, which will include working to see free prescription contraception rolled out across the country and expanded here in BC. In particular, our team is hard at work planning our next big advocacy push, which will centre around improving pain management for IUD insertions.



Friends from the [Society for Advocacy for Gender-Affirming Healthcare](#) (SAGAH) have launched a new advocacy campaign. SAGAH is community-focused, trans-founded society advocating for the healthcare and human rights of Two-Spirit, trans, and gender diverse people.

Their current letter writing campaign calls on the BC Ministry of Health and MLAs to make comprehensive trans healthcare a reality in BC. They are calling for comprehensive access to gender-affirming medications, procedures, and services, bringing healthcare to our communities and bridging the gap for trans women and femmes; enhanced support for primary care through greater funding, upscaled training, and robust standards of care; and coroner reporting on trans mortality in the province, strengthening our commitment to remembrance and our fight against erasure.

Learn more and [take action here](#).



Dropping off InterGenerational Pen Pal promotional postcards for the Greater Victoria Literacy Connection, to local LFLs.

With the improved weather, I've been able to get back out with my bike trailer to top up our region's growing network of little free libraries. I also recently updated the Greater Victoria Placemaking Network's (GVPN) [regional map of LFLs](#), and I am very excited to say that there are now over 898 LFLs in the region! So that means stay tuned for exciting news about a forthcoming ribbon cutting for number 900!

The GVPN is also planning a special summer little free library event, so stay tuned for more about this as well. And for those of you who have a little free library or would like to help book boxes in your area, the [Times Colonist Book Sale](#) is coming up at the start of May! Mark your calendars and watch your email for more information about the sale and the post-sale book pickup opportunity!

BC Humanist Research



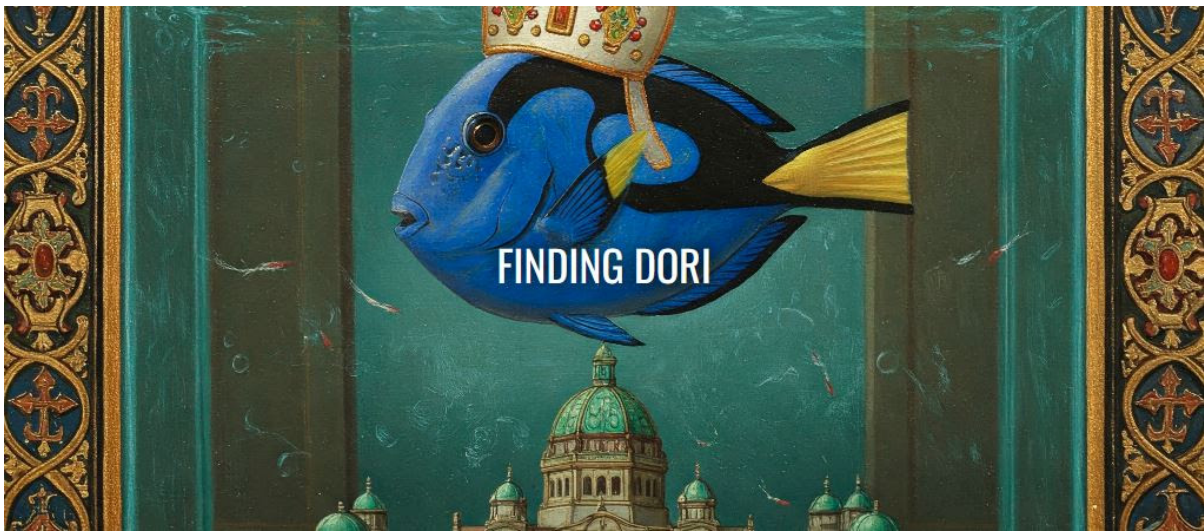
April 15th will mark the 10th anniversary of the Canadian Supreme Court's decision in *MLQ v Saguenay*. This landmark ruling found that prayers at municipal council meetings violated the state's constitutional duty of religious neutrality.

For the past several years, the BC Humanist Association's [Saguenay Project](#) has been exploring compliance with this decision. Our work has uncovered dozens of municipalities across the country that have been violating the constitution by including prayer in their meetings.

On April 15th, 2025, at noon, I will be joining BCHA's Executive Director Ian Bushfield on a YouTube Live to mark the 10th anniversary of the Saguenay decision and to release our newest report on municipal prayer in BC. You can [learn more here!](#)

We will take you through the decision, its implications, and explore how the BCHA has worked for several years to audit, and lobby for, compliance among municipalities across Canada, and launching our newest BC report.

If you are ever interested in getting involved as a volunteer member of the Research Team, [get in touch!](#) We have an ongoing need for volunteers to help with activities ranging from data collection and transcription, to report writing and communications. Our current projects explore topics including legislative prayer, school district policy, tax policy, humanist chaplaincy programs, municipal policy and procedure, and more.



In case you missed it, we had a little fun on April 1st and release a new 'groundbreaking and controversial report' entitled: "[Finding DORI: A Department of Religious Inefficiency](#)." You can [learn more here](#), and read the full satirical report [here](#).

Marine Conservation



The OceansAsia research team has been hard at work getting a couple of new papers across the finish line. I am please to say that I have a forthcoming paper in Conservation Biology exploring crime in global seahorse fisheries, written with colleagues from [Project Seahorse](#).

I am also excited to say that our team has a paper on crime in Canadian sea cucumber fisheries coming out in this year's issue of the Beche-de-Mer Information Bulletin. This paper is very timely, as one of the largest sea cucumber crime cases in recent Canadian history is working its way through the courts. In January, [Scott Steer](#) was found guilty on six counts relating to his illicit sea cucumber fishing activity in our waters.

If you are interested in learning more, tune in to this episode of [The Nest](#), where I sat down with Martlet Editor-in-Chief Sydney Lobe to talk about the case and sea cucumber wildlife crime in general. I also recently gave an [interview with CFAX](#) about the Steer case.

OceansAsia's work tackling marine wildlife crime is ongoing, stay tuned for more.

I hope your spring is festooned with flowers, and don't forget to vote in the federal election!

Warm regards,



Dr. Teale Phelps Bondaroff

P.S. - If you have Saanich friends and neighbours who might like to receive these newsletter, do please share [this link](#) with them.



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