
A major milestone in 2026!

1 message

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Happy New Year!

Friends,

I hope you had a wonderful winter holiday! I wanted to take a moment to wish you a Happy New Year! As 2026 begins, I'm kicking off what will be a big year. This year, I'm running for re-election to Saanich Council and in early February, I will be turning 40!

Throughout my first term as a municipal councillor I've been a consistent voice for housing, road safety, accessibility, and the environment. And I have also done a tone advocacy to the provincial government.

I worked hard to remove parking minimum requirements from new housing projects, which is helping to lower building costs and get more housing built faster. On road safety, I supported the implementation of the district's Road Safety Action Plan and Traffic Calming Strategy, and I

continue to fight for safe active transportation and improved transit in the region. I'm proud to have worked with councillors and non-profit leaders from throughout the province to advocate to the provincial government on several issues, including free transit for youth, housing as a human right, accessibility, and coastal protection.

This is a great start, but we all know there is so much more that needs to be done. That's where I need your help.

My birthday wish is to start off the year and my re-election campaign on strong footing. To help me celebrate 40 rotations around the sun, can you [donate \\$40, \\$160 or \\$400 now to my re-election campaign?](#)

Any amount is deeply appreciated (please note only BC residents can donate!). Thank you so much to everyone who has already pitched in!

If you're local to the Victoria area and you'd like to **volunteer** on the campaign, we would love to have you. Please [sign up with our volunteer form.](#)



Chief Eric Pelkey addressing the crowd at the PKOLS Salmon Carcass Transplant

There are a number of significant items coming up on the Saanich Council agenda. This evening, at our Committee of the Whole meeting, we will be exploring the most recent draft of the [Quadra-McKenzie Plan](#). This current iteration of the plan incorporates additional input from Phase 4 engagement, and includes adjustments building off the previous version. If you have any additional feedback for Council, please make sure letters get in before noon today (Monday), and you are most welcome to attend the meeting or to tune in on the live stream, which starts at 6:30pm.



Tossing a dead salmon into Douglas Creek at the PKOLS Salmon Carcass Transplant. As part of the recently adopted [Panama Flats Concept Plan](#), Saanich is in the process of rezoning the flats to P5 and P4N, the District's highest conservation protections for parks. Panama Flats is an absolute gem and I am very pleased to see these protections in place for what is important wetland habitat.

With an eye at further ensuring that the ecosystem and wildlife at Panama Flats are protected, I was pleased to second my colleague Councillor Harper's motion to tweak the animal bylaws relating to the flats, at our most recent council meeting. As a result of this motion, at our January 26th meeting, Council will be exploring whether or not we should permit off leash dogs along the Colquitz River Corridor (the trail running from Roy Rd. to Hyacinth Park). We will be considering two options:

- 1) Set the trail as leash-optional and install strategic fencing along the trail in order to protect important habitat areas from off leash dogs. This is the option proposed in the plan.
- 2) Set the trail as on-leash. This is Councillor Harper's motion, which I was happy to second.

I feel as though the first alternative will lead to more trail user conflicts, will cost a lot more money (fencing), and will not result in the best conservation outcomes. You can learn more about the issue from articles in the [Saanich News](#), [Times Colonist](#), or tune into my recent [interview on CFAX](#). And that interview also covers changes in green fees for Cedar Hill Golf Course. I also break down the issue in this [TikTok](#).

If you have an opinion on this proposal Council would love to hear it. You are most welcome to attend our meeting on January 26th, or you can always write to council at Council@Saanich.ca.



Visiting Panama Flats!

While my 40th birthday is fast approaching, my 20th anniversary in Canadian politics just passed. From the math you can tell that I got involved in politics young. Given this, it is little wonder that I have long supported efforts to increase youth engagement in politics.

For and for the past several months, I have been working with Mark Neufeld and a fantastic student from Claremont Secondary to establish a Youth Advisory Committee for Saanich. This unofficial advisory committee has already met twice and will be meeting monthly until the summer. In addition to teaching members about local government, policy literacy, and advocacy, we will also be exploring the priorities of the members of the committee with the goal of operationalizing them and presenting them to Saanich Council.

At our January meeting, we were grateful for the presence of Mayor Dean Murdock, who talked about what got him involved in local government, how Saanich works, and answered nearly 2 hours of questions from the committee members.

It was great to get back into a classroom again and I can't wait for our next meeting (which will be sooner than expected, as the committee voted to hold extra meetings in February).



Saanich Mayor Dean Murdock with the Saanich Youth Advisory Committee!

In honour of International Day of Persons With Disabilities 2025 and the 40th Anniversary of Rick Hansen's Man In Motion World Tour, The Rick Hansen Foundation brought together a panel of individuals to share their experiences on the positive impacts of improved accessibility in communities where we live, work, learn and play. I was honoured to participate in this panel and share some of the work and advocacy I've been doing to help improve accessibility in Saanich and across BC. [Watch the full webcast here!](#)

WELCOME TO

The Power of Accessible Communities

Celebrating 40 Years of Busting Barriers



Saanich News

- **Telecommunications replacement tower construction to begin at PKOLS (Mt Douglas Park) summit:** The District of Saanich will be undertaking planned telecommunication tower construction starting Monday, January 19, 2026. To ensure public safety, areas around the summit will be restricted. The gate to Churchill Drive will remain closed at all times, unless otherwise noted, for approximately three months while the building phase of the new tower is underway. The parking lot in front of the gate will still be open and available to use, unless otherwise advised by the project contractor. [Learn more here](#). Or from this piece from [CHEK News](#).
- **Saanich balances water utility fees to ensure more sustainable funding:** The District of Saanich is shifting a larger share of water utility fees to a fixed rate. This approach minimizes the risk of the water and sewer budgets going into a deficit and stabilizes rate increases. [Learn more here](#).



Hanging out with Avi Lewis, who recently held a huge meeting in Victoria. If you are looking to vote in the upcoming Federal NDP leadership race, make sure your membership is up-to-date. The deadline to [join](#) in order to vote is January 28th!

- **Easier access and participation in Council meetings:** The District of Saanich has launched a refreshed Council Agendas, Minutes and Videos webpage to make it simpler to follow and participate in Council business. [Find the new webpage here](#). The full schedule for all of our 2026 meetings can be [found here](#).
- **SD61 Trustees Shift from at-large to Local Representation:** Last fall, I had the privilege of serving as the Saanich representative on the working group that explored [electoral reform](#) for trustees for School District 61. I am pleased to say that the Education Minister approved our proposal to shift to a model with seven trustee electoral areas based on existing municipal and First Nations reserve boundaries. Nine trustees will be elected to the school board this October and will be distributed amongst the electoral areas as follows: Esquimalt Nation (1), Songhees Nation (1), Highlands/View Royal (1), Esquimalt (1), Victoria (2), Saanich (2), and Oak Bay (1). [Learn more from this CFAX story](#).

Family Doctors for Saanich Launched!



Family Doctors for Saanich volunteers tabling at Saanich Commonwealth Pool!

Following our campaign launch in mid-December, **Family Doctors for Saanich** has been hard at work. The past two weekends we've been tabling at Commonwealth Pool, and I've been out on the doorstep speaking with Saanich neighbours.

This volunteer-led initiative aims to help more residents get attached to primary care providers and encourage participation in local efforts to bring additional doctors to the region.

Family Doctors for Saanich is encouraging anyone who does not have a family doctor or nurse practitioner, and who is not already on the list, to sign up with the **Health Connect Registry**. This is the provincial system used to help match patients with available primary care providers in their community. Signing up only takes a few minutes, and doing so helps both individuals and the health system as a whole.

[Learn more, take action, and get involved here!](#)



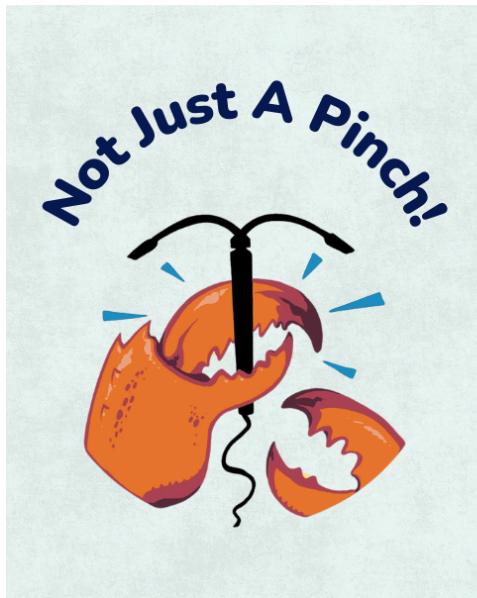
We are also working to support broader efforts to bring more primary care capacity to the region, including fundraising initiatives led by local partners and allies. We are currently helping support the fundraising efforts of the [South Island Primary Care Society](#), a local organization helping to expand access to primary care across Greater Victoria. Their current fundraising priorities include expanding clinic capacity and supporting the arrival of new doctors to the region. Family Doctors for Saanich strongly supports these efforts and encourages residents to donate directly to the Society.

We are also building an [update list](#), which we will use to let people know about relevant items coming up in front of Saanich Council!

If you would like any cards and buttons to give out to neighbours, please get in touch!

Et pour mes amis francophones, j'ai parlé de la campagne à Radio-Canada. Écoutez l'émission [ici](#) et [lire plus ici](#).

Reproductive Justice Advocacy



Pain Relief Is Not a Luxury, It's a Right!

Call on your MLA to improve pain management for IUD insertions:



 AccessBC.org

 AccessBC

 access.bc

 AccessBC

Volunteers from [AccessBC](#) have been hard at work on our new campaign calling on the Government of British Columbia to improve access to effective pain management during intrauterine device (IUD) insertions.

I spent a bunch of time over the holidays prepping outreach packages for volunteers and we will soon have folks tabling at campuses and community events across the province, working to mobilize people for our ongoing [letter writing campaign](#), calling on the Government of British Columbia to:

1. Adopt province-specific clinical guidelines for addressing pain management planning for IUD insertions.
2. Implement appropriate MSP billing mechanisms for pain control interventions.
3. Work with post-secondary and training institutions to implement mandatory training requirements for practitioners.
4. Implement strategies for equitable access to pain management during IUD insertions across all regions.

Please take a moment to learn more and [write your MLA and the Minister of Health today!](#)

Thank you to everyone who has already written a letter! We also recently had a very productive meeting with Parliamentary Secretary for Gender Equity, Jennifer Blatherwick, and we are gearing up to announce our campaign mascots and to celebrate the 3rd anniversary of free prescription contraception in BC!

IS YOUR HEALTH IN JEOPARDY ?

IMAGE SCRIMMAGE	DECEPTION ALLEY	THE FINE PRINT	TRUST ME, I'M A PROFESSIONAL	FREE STUFF
\$500	\$500	\$500	\$500	\$500
\$1000	\$1000	\$1000	\$1000	\$1000
\$2000	\$2000	\$2000	\$2000	\$2000

This month, I had the opportunity to fulfill a childhood dream of being a corny gameshow host! I teamed up with a fantastic group of volunteers from the Abortion Rights Coalition of Canada (ARCC) to shoot an episode of "Is Your Health in Jeopardy?" a corny gameshow we designed to teach people about the harms of unregulated pregnancy centres, also known as crisis pregnancy centres (or just 'fake clinics').

Unregulated Pregnancy Centers (UPCs) are anti-abortion ministries pretending to be medical clinics. Their volunteers are not medical professionals, and their main goal is to stop abortions by spreading misinformation for people seeking care.

Yours truly, playing Dr. Disinfo, challenged contestants Ginger Sparks, Joycie Joyous, and Angie Lemon, on their knowledge of all things reproductive justice and UPC. [Check out the episode here!](#) I am looking forward to working with the team to explore other creative and fun ways to warn people about the harms of UPCs!



BC Humanist Research Advocacy



It was a busy month for the [BC Humanist Association](#) (BCHA) research team. Following up from our big win getting [anti-abortion billboards removed in Kelowna](#), I had the chance to dip my toes back into Alberta politics. In December, Alberta's Minister of Education and Childcare and MLA for Calgary Bow (my old provincial riding) Demetrios Nicolaides, circulated a [proselytizing letter](#) to the parents with children in Alberta public schools.

The letter went beyond a general seasonal message and into explicit religious advocacy. In the letter, Minister Nicolaides described the "birth of Jesus Christ" as the "cornerstone of faith," referred to the "Incarnation of Christ" as the inspiration for service, and rooted the "value of every child" in "the message brought forth by the nativity." We sprang into action and launched a [letter writing campaign](#). The campaign urged the Minister to retract and apologize for the letter and for using the power of his office to promote his own religious beliefs.

If you live in Alberta, or would just appreciate it if elected officials supported the state's duty of religious neutrality, take a few seconds to [write the Minister](#). Big surprise, [Juno News](#) was thrilled by Demetrios using his office to proselytize.

I've also been hard at work on a number of big reports, exploring a range of topics including tax reform, secularism in Quebec, unregulated pregnancy centres, and prison reform. Stay tuned for more!



The BCHA is also heading back to court! Lawyers have begun presenting arguments at the BC Supreme Court in a trial that could determine the future of faith-based hospitals in the province.

The case stems from the tragic death of Sam O'Neill, whose request to access medical assistance in dying (MAiD) required a transfer from her bed at St Paul's Catholic Hospital to a secular facility. She died during that process and was denied the ability to say goodbye to her loved ones.

Because of the views of its board of governors, St Paul's Hospital refuses to provide MAiD, as well as abortions or contraceptives. The Province of BC permits this refusal through a 1995 Master Agreement and funds the hospital.

The BC Humanist Association is intervening in the case to argue the Master Agreement amounts to the Province contracting out its obligations under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, including its duty of religious neutrality. The Canadian Civil Liberties Association will argue that healthcare organizations cannot claim the right to religious freedom. [Learn more here!](#)

I hope you have a fantastic 2026. I can't wait to share campaign updates with you, and if you can, [please chip in](#) to help me celebrate my 40th and support my re-election campaign!

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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