
Spring Update from Teale!

1 message

Teale Phelps Bondaroff via ActionNetwork.org <hello@teale.ca> 22 April 2026 at 23:01

Reply-To: hello@teale.ca

To: tealepb@gmail.com



A Spring Update from Teale

Friends,

Spring has definitely sprung on Saanich. I hope I'm not the only one taking advantage of beautiful sunny weather to get out into the community! Less rain means I can get out more to chat with Saanich neighbours and top up little free libraries with the old bike trailer. The past month has been jam-packed, as Council worked to finalize our financial plan and made some big decisions around a number of community plans, among other things.

With respect to some of my other projects and campaigns, I celebrated the 3rd anniversary of free prescription contraception in BC with AccessBC, worked hard on outreach for the Family Doctors for Saanich campaign, published a new report and completed a massive project on humanist prison chaplains for the BC Humanist Research Team, and updated the Greater Victoria Placemaking Network's [little free library map](#).

This week is far from a typical week, but is shaping up to be a blast. Earlier this week, I spent a couple of shifts volunteering as a book sorter for the upcoming [Times Colonist Book Sale](#) (May 2 and 3). Today, I was down at the Legislature speaking at a rally for [free transit for youth](#). Tomorrow I'm up at UVic for the Worldviews in Energy and Climate Engagement project kick-off, and the rest of the week will see me at the annual meeting of the Association of Vancouver Island and Coastal Communities (AVICC) [AGM and Conference](#), taking place in Victoria. All in all, busy times!



Family Doctors for Saanich standing in solidarity with our friends from Shoreline Medical at a recent community photo. See if you can spot me! [Learn more here](#).

Re-Election Campaign Volunteer Canvassers Needed!

While the October municipal election is still a ways away, with spring bringing more sunny days, I've been getting out onto the doorstep every week and you can join in! If you like to chat with people and enjoy a bit of walking, our canvassing team is perfect for you! You can join in for as much or as little time as you'd like and training is provided. To sign up, fill in our [volunteer form](#) and our campaign coordinator will be in touch.

Canvassing is a fantastic way to connect with Saanich neighbours and learn more about the issues that are important to residents. We've also been talking to people about the Family Doctors for Saanich Health Connect Registry registration drive, and doing what we can to help get folks attached to a family doctor or nurse practitioner (see below for more).



A fantastic group of volunteers hitting the doorstep in Saanich!

2026 Capital Works Projects Guide out now

What new road works, park improvements and more are coming to Saanich this year? I'm so glad you asked! You can check out the brand new Capital Works Projects Guide for 2026 to find out if a new bike lane might be coming to your street, or if some new trees might be coming to your neighbourhood, or simply if you're getting some sewer upgrades near you.

One thing that I'm super excited about for my neighbourhood is a pedestrian and cyclist light at Savannah and Cloverdale (page 16), which is going to make it way easier to navigate this area as a pedestrian.

So check out [the guide](#) if you're curious about what's on deck this year for our roads, parks and more.



Our lengthy budgeting process is nearing an end, with Council voting to support a number of cuts that brought the overall tax lift to 5.35%. It was a challenging year, with Council working hard to balance pressing needs in our community and a desire to maintain current service levels against a desire to get the lift as low as possible. The process involved protracted debate.

Despite my best efforts, missing from this year's budget was \$647,000 in funding to support the implementation of our 'Accelerated' Active Transportation Plan (AATP). A portion of this funding would have allowed our AATP us to keep up with inflation, which is currently working against the implementation of this important plan, let alone accelerated implementation.

While Council did not support *ongoing* funding for our Traffic Calming Strategy, I was relieved that Council did decide to support this strategy with \$250,000 as a one year pilot as part of our one time funding requests from surplus. My attempts to explore a cap on permissive tax exemptions (PTEs) were rebuffed, though I think this is something the District may want to consider as PTEs make up an increasing percentage of our budget and are granted to many recipients without a proper benefits test. Read more in the [Times Colonist](#) and the [Saanich News](#).



Visiting Oak Street, from the Saanich News.

Provincial Community Housing Fund Advocacy

As part of its recent austerity budget, the provincial government decided to pull back over \$775 million from the Community Housing Fund (CHF). This fund was critical to delivering much needed affordable housing across the province ([learn more from UBCM](#)).

Established in 2018 with \$3.3 billion, the CHF helped construct over 13,000 homes by providing funding to non-profit housing organizations, housing co-operatives,

municipalities, First Nations, and Indigenous-led housing societies.

The termination of the funding for the CHF has left many shovel ready and even ongoing projects in the lurch. This includes the Garth Homer Society's project in the Nigel Valley, which was supposed to deliver 90 homes for low-income people and people with developmental disabilities. With the society hoping for a \$16 million provincial grant and \$44 million in financing. Now this project, and dozens of others across the province are up in the air. Learn more from the [Times Colonist](#). I was proud to support efforts by Council to advocate to the province to reinstate the Community Housing Fund, and I hope the province will listen. Learn more from this [Times Colonist](#) article.



I am very proud of the work of the Saanich Youth Council, which I am helping run. These amazing young people voted to double the number of their meetings so they will have more time to explore transportation issues!

AVICC Resolutions

Later this week, I will be heading down to Victoria for the Association of Vancouver Island and Coastal Communities AGM and Conference. I am looking forward to the opportunity to connect with colleagues from across the region, attend learning sessions, debate resolutions, and host a placemaking walking tour in James Bay. At our March 2nd meeting, I proposed three draft resolutions for AVICC developed in close consultation with other municipalities and community members (see Items [D1](#), [D2](#), and [D3](#) for detailed backgrounders and full draft resolutions).

The first resolution called on AVICC and UBCM to advocate that provincial motor vehicle legislation and regulations be updated to allow the use of wheelchairs and 3 & 4 wheel mobility scooters on bike lanes and traffic calmed bike routes across BC. This resolution responded to growing calls from seniors, accessibility, and active transportation advocates, and sought to add

Saanich's support to a resolution already adopted by the [City of Victoria](#). This resolution failed 4-5.

The second resolution called on AVICC and UBCM to advocate to the provincial government to provide funding support to BC post-secondary student unions, by establishing a food security grant, equivalent to \$1.50 per student, to address student food insecurity as evidenced by the increased use of post-secondary campus food banks. I worked on this resolution with UVic students, and sought to add Saanich's support to a resolution already adopted by the [District of Oak Bay](#). Procedural motions prevented this motion from being debated.

The third resolution called on AVICC and UBCM to advocate to the province for a \$10/day flat rate ferry fare pilot program, during non-peak hours, for post-secondary students. This was also developed in collaboration with UVic students, and similarly sought to add Saanich's support to a resolution also adopted by the [District of Oak Bay](#). Similar procedural motions prevented this motion from being debated.

While I support the will of Council, I will be supporting these draft resolutions, along with a number of others, at AVICC this week. Learn more from this piece from [The Martlet](#).



Meeting with Dana Lajeunesse, the Parliamentary Secretary for Accessibility.

Other Saanich Updates

Before I go into the traditional speed run of recent significant Council decisions, I wanted to take a moment to thank everyone who shares their views with Council, whether it speaking or writing to Council or through our formal consultation processes associated with a specific plan or strategy, your input is always valued and appreciated. We had a lot of significant consultations wrap up this past month, with a lot of people participating in them, so thank you.

- **Shelbourne Valley Plan moves to public hearing:** The Proposed Updated Shelbourne Valley Plan will be moving forward to a public hearing later this year, after Council adopted a handful of amendments in late February. You can [learn more here](#), and from news stories in the [Victoria News](#) and [Times Colonist](#).
- **Federal and provincial funding for Rithet's Bog:** The District of Saanich has been awarded \$10,000 from Environment and Climate Change Canada through their Priority Places funding, implemented through the BC Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship, to support the development and implementation of a wetland stewardship plan for Chatterton Marsh in the park. The plan will provide threat abatement and restoration recommendations and actions for Vancouver Island beggarticks (a [yellow wildflower](#)) and northern red-legged frogs, which are federally listed species at risk. [Learn more here](#), and from this [CHEK News piece](#).



Just a portion of the plants on offer at a community plant swap my amazing partner organized in Rutledge Park recently. We are now the proud caregivers of our first carnivorous plant!

- **Quadra McKenzie Plan moves to public hearing:** After many rounds of public consultation, the draft Quadra McKenzie Plan is off to public hearing. Given the pressing need for more housing diversity in the District, I fought hard against a number of amendments that reduced potential density in a number neighbourhoods at our April 13th Council meeting that ran well past midnight. Ultimately the amendments were adopted, and the plan is off to public hearing. Read more from this [Saanich Press Release](#), and articles in the [Times Colonist](#), [Victoria News](#).
- **Annual Housing Progress Report:** Saanich has been working hard to hit our provincial housing targets of 4,610 units, which according to our recent [Housing Needs Report](#) represent ~75% of the anticipated housing needs in the District. We are getting close, with

582 new units at occupancy permits (housing completions) in 2025, compared with the 601 provincial target for 2025. We have managed to deliver a range of different housing types, including non-market housing, which is promising. One alarming number in this report is the vacancy rate for 3-bedroom units, which is currently at 0%. [Learn more here](#).

There is clearly a pressing need for more housing in the District, which is why I argued against a motion that would have seen Saanich challenging the province's housing target for the District on March 16th. This motion, was ultimately sent to committee for further consideration. Learn more from the [Times Colonist](#) and [Saanich News](#).



Visiting Oak Street, from the Saanich News.

- **Uptown Douglas Plan:** The [Uptown Douglas Plan](#) (UDP) provides a 20 to 30 year vision for the area roughly between Uptown and Mayfair Mall. It focuses on affordable and diverse housing, active transportation, economic vibrancy, urban design, sustainable development and climate change mitigation and resilience, and lays out a vision for the heart of Saanich. Personally, I love the proposed transformation of Oak Street, which promises a vibrant, engaging, and walkable high street, something that is lacking in the District. Engagement for the plan will begin this spring. Learn more from this piece in the [Saanich News](#).
- **Saanich Community Poet and Community Youth Poet announced:** The District is thrilled to share that two poets have been selected to represent Saanich through poetry, spoken word, and the literary arts - Community Poet Jesse Holth and Community Youth Poet Bennett Gilleland. [Learn more here](#).
- **District of Saanich and CUPE 2011 finalize new agreement:** The District of Saanich and CUPE 2011, which represents the District's unionized workers have successfully

reached a new collective agreement. [Learn more here.](#)

Family Doctors for Saanich



Family Doctors for Saanich standing in solidarity with our friends from Shoreline Medical at a recent community photo. [Learn more here.](#)

The **Family Doctors for Saanich** campaign has been trucking along, with amazing volunteers tabling and canvassing around the community as part of our Health Connect Registry registration drive. If you do not have a family doctor or nurse practitioner, and are not already on the list, please sign up to the **Health Connect Registry**.

As you know, we are working on a number of other initiatives, supporting fundraising for the South Island Primary Care Society, setting up a welcome wagon for new doctors, and advocacy, and this month, we need your help with advocacy.

In my capacity as a Saanich Councillor, I have been exploring a wide range of policies that will help get more clinics built in the District and ensure that the clinics we have stay open. I recently supported efforts to explore permissive tax exemptions for not-for-profit clinics in the District, and **coming up on May 4th**, I will be presenting a motion to Saanich Council on density bonusing and more. The motion is as follows:

That Saanich Council direct staff to explore extending the list of qualifying amenities for density bonuses in the Density Bonus Framework to include doctors offices and medical clinics.

And further, that Saanich Council direct staff to explore other ways of incentivizing the inclusion of doctors offices and medical clinics in new developments, such as Floor Space Ratio (FSR) exclusions or Community Amenity Contribution (CAC)/Amenity Cost Charges (ACC) exemptions or reductions.

You can learn more about this resolution from the accompanying backgrounder, which is [available here](#), and I put together this quick [explainer video here](#). Family Doctors for Saanich is looking for people to step up and support this motion and there are a couple of ways you can help: 1) Write to Council at Council@saanich.ca before noon on May 4th, and 2) attend and speak at the May 4th meeting. Community voices will help ensure that Council supports this motions.

We are always looking for folks to get involved, especially as we get our new welcome wagon rolling. [Learn more, take action, and get involved here!](#)

Reproductive Justice Advocacy



The start of April was the 3rd anniversary of free prescription contraception in British Columbia, and you better believe that AccessBC was celebrating, along with the over 400,000 people who have benefited from this policy!

The policy has been transformative! Between April 1, 2023 and February 28, 2026, the Ministry of Health reports that 407,000 people were able to access a wide range of prescription contraceptives at no cost (including emergency contraception). Including 232,000 hormonal pills, 105,000 hormonal IUDs, 101,000 emergency contraceptives, 17,000 implants, 16,000 copper IUDs, 14,000 hormonal injections, and 7,000 rings!

[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, [published in the BMJ](#), found a 49%-per-cent jump in long-acting reversible contraception (LARC) use after BC made contraception free! You can learn more from news stories in [The Tyee](#), the [Victoria Buzz](#), [Island Social Trends](#), and [Victoria Now](#).



We are also celebrating the implementation of the national Pharmacare plan here in BC, which resulted in free menopause hormone therapy (MHT), also known as hormone replacement therapy (HRT) and diabetes medicine and supplies being rolled out on March 1st! Learn more about [Plan NP here](#), and from this [CBC news story](#). Yukon just rolled out its national Pharmacare plan program last week! [Learn more here](#). We are making progress!

We are going to need additional leadership from the federal government, as no further pharmacare agreements have been signed since the new government was elected, meanwhile a number of provinces have indicated enthusiasm for negotiations.

While we celebrate progress here in BC, we are also working to tackle other barriers people face when trying to access prescription contraception. If you haven't had a chance to do so already, please take 30 seconds to participate in our ongoing [letter writing campaign](#) aimed at improving pain management for IUD insertions.

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

BC Humanist Research



April 15th was the 11th anniversary of the *Saguenay* case, where the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that prayers at municipal council meetings unconstitutionally violated the state's duty of religious neutrality. Starting in 2025, the BC Humanist Association (BCHA) has marked the anniversary with [Religious Neutrality Day](#) as a way to recognize to the importance of religious neutrality across Canada. This year, the Cities of Ottawa, Toronto, and Vancouver proclaimed April 15, 2026 as Religious Neutrality Day.

As part of our celebration of Religious Neutrality Day, the BCHA released a new report I helped author entitled "[Lost in Translation: From Laicity to True Religious Neutrality](#)". This report responds to fifty recommendations issued by Quebec's 2025 *Comité d'étude sur le respect des principes de la Loi sur la laïcité de l'État*. In exploring these recommendations, we applauded measures aimed at dismantling institutional religious privilege, while warning that other proposals risk undermining fundamental human rights in the name of "appearance."

The report argues that assaults on individual freedoms undermine the promise of secularism and the government's duty of religious neutrality. It draws a sharp distinction between Quebec's approach to laicity (closed secularism) and the duty of religious neutrality or open secularism. You can [read the full report here](#), and tune into [this recent CFX interview](#) I gave for a brief overview. I also joined one of my co-authors, BCHA Executive Director Ian Bushfield, on a [YouTube Live](#) to explore the report, check it out!



The Census will be circulating this May. The information gathered by the Census influences public spending, policy decisions, and who governments consult, among other things. In reviewing the questions on the Census, one might notice the misleading phrasing of Question 30, which asks for the religion of every person in a given household, and directs respondents to indicate a religion or faith even if the individual “is not currently a practicing member of that group.”

This phrasing of this question is misleading, and may encourage people who are not religious to tick the religious box out of habit or family tradition. This creates a "ghost" religious population. When non-religious people are undercounted, it impacts government policy, and can result in situations where religious groups gain disproportionate influence over our laws, our healthcare, and our education system.

That's why the BCHA launched a campaign encouraging non-religious people to tick "no religion" on the Census, in order to ensure that the results accurately reflect people's beliefs. You can learn more about the campaign from the BCHA [here](#), and from stories in the [Prince George Daily News](#) and [CTV News](#).

If you got this far down, well done! Hope to see you at the Times Colonist Book Sale and as always if you would like to connect around a local issue, please reach out.

And remember, you can sign up to volunteer for my re-election campaign at teale.ca.

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several loops and a long horizontal stroke.

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.



Sent via Action Network, a free online toolset anyone can use to organize. [Click here to sign up](#) and get started building an email list and creating online actions today.

Action Network is an open platform that empowers individuals and groups to organize for progressive causes. We encourage responsible activism, and do not support using the platform to take unlawful or other improper action. We do not control or endorse the conduct of users and make no representations of any kind about them.

You can unsubscribe or update your email address or change your name and address by [changing your subscription preferences here](#).