An Update and Call to Action from Teale!

1 message

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November Update and Call to Action!

Friends,

I hope you are keeping cozy with the arrival of winter storms. Saanich Council's first meeting of the 2026–2030 term featured six notices of motion, several of which may be of concern to residents and have implications for the future of our community.

The topics of the motions were wide ranging, and included everything from repealing retractable dog leash restrictions, supporting economic development, expanding public engagement, and more (learn more from CHEK News). I wanted to flag three of these motions that may have a significant impact on residents and encourage you to share your thoughts with Council.

Road Safety and Active Transportation

Two motions coming before Saanich Council on November 30 could have significant implications for the future of road safety and active transportation in our community. One (H1) proposes **an immediate moratorium on new bike lanes and traffic-calming initiatives** throughout the District, while the other (H3) calls for a review of the Mann Avenue bike lanes with the goal of restoring on-street parking. You can learn more about these motions from CHEK News, CTV News, and Victoria Buzz.

I have serious concerns about the potential impact of these motions on road safety and our ability to build a safer, more sustainable, affordable, and connected transportation network. The Mann Ave bike lake in particular is an important part of safe active transportation routes to Camosun College. **I encourage you to let Council know where you stand by writing to Council and/or speaking at Monday's meeting**. Learn more about how to connect with Saanich Council and speak at meetings here.

Investing in active transportation infrastructure helps make our streets safer for everyone, provides people with affordable transportation options, reduces greenhouse gas emissions, and helps address traffic congestion. Traffic has been a growing concern in the District, and given that our vehicular road network is largely built out and we live on an island with restricted space, the best way to reduce traffic is by giving people a range of safe, convenient, connected, and affordable ways to get around. This is not ideology, it is evidence-based best practice that has been shown to work in municipalities throughout the world.

I take road safety very seriously, and have long been a supporter of the District's suite of road safety policies and strategies, and I fought hard last term to try to get our Traffic Calming Strategy fully funded. To make our roads safer, we need better rules, monitoring and enforcement, road-user education, and safer street design. Traffic calming refers to physical design measures that encourage drivers to slow down, such as speed humps, raised crosswalks, and curb extensions. These physical elements encourage slower driving through road design. Traffic calming is a critical part of that design component, and we know it works.

Your voice matters a great deal in local government, and I hope you'll take a few minutes to share your thoughts on the future of road safety and active transportation in Saanich by emailing or coming to speak to council.

You can email all Saanich Council members at council@saanich.ca (written submissions must be received by noon on November 30). Capital Bike has a letter writing program that you may find helpful.

Speaking at the November 30 meeting in person or online through MS Teams is another powerful way you can stand up for active transportation and road safety in our community. You may speak for up to three minutes during the public portion of the meeting, which is scheduled to begin at 5:30pm.

To add yourself to the speaking queue ahead of time, you can register to speak by emailing council@saanich.ca or calling 250-475-5501 before noon on the day of the meeting. You may also speak even if you don't register, but you will need to wait until registered speakers have all spoken.



Renderings of the future Nellie McClung Public Library and with affordable housing.

Affordable Housing

Another important issue coming before Saanich Council on December 7 is the future of the Nellie McClung Library and Affordable Housing Project. A notice of motion from one of my new colleagues, also presented at our last meeting, calls on Saanich to engage with the Capital Regional Housing Corporation, the Province, and other partners with the aim of reducing the height of this project.

This motion is concerning, as it would reopen decisions about a project that has already been approved, with demolition complete and construction underway. At stake is a new, approximately 29,000-square-foot public library and 210 affordable rental homes, including 42 homes at shelter rates, 105 at rent-geared-to-income rates, and 63 at below-market rents. This is much-needed affordable rental housing on top of a public library. You can learn more about this project here.

You cannot just shave a few floors off the top of a building design and otherwise proceed as planned. Attempting to fundamentally change the project at this stage risks jeopardizing the entire project, along with funding and partnerships, delaying much-needed housing and library services. This has the potential to saddle taxpayers with millions of dollars in additional re-design costs, and the potential for litigation around altering an existing $157.8 million contract. The project was developed through an extensive public consultation process, and it is deeply concerning to see an attempt to revisit these decisions after construction has already begun.

This item is scheduled to appear on the Council agenda on December 7th, and the full agenda should be available for review here by Thursday next week. Once again, I would encourage you to share your thoughts with Council before the meeting, and/or come out and speak on the 7th. The HQ Collective has put together this very helpful letter writing page.

Officially Sworn In



I am incredibly grateful to everyone who supported me and my campaign for re-election to Saanich Council. I cannot thank you enough for all your support and I will do my best to do you proud on Council this term. Earlier this month, I was honoured to be sworn in as a Saanich Councillor. You can read more about our inaugural meeting from these articles in the Island Social Trends, Saanich News, and Saanich press release.

Thank you everyone who sent in well wishes and congratulations, I'm still trying to get to all the emails, as the first few weeks on council were very busy. Immediately following our inauguration, Saanich staff organized a two week 'Council Bootcamp' to help orient new and returning members of Council. It was a jam-packed couple of weeks getting a refresher on all the many aspects of the municipality. I also had the opportunity to attend a number of other training and orientation events and tours as well. It has been interesting getting to know my new council colleague, and explore areas of mutual interest with them.

I would also be remiss if I did not mention the final council meeting of the 2022-2026 Saanich Council. It was an emotional meeting honouring my previous council colleagues for their service and dedication to the community we all love.



My parents, partner, and I at the 2026 Saanich Council Inaugural Meeting.

Other Saanich Updates

There's always so much going on, so here's a rapid fire of some important recent Saanich news:

- **The Reflective Address Sign Program is back!** The Saanich Fire Department is implementing a Reflective Address Sign program to support residents who may have long driveways or live on a street in low visibility. This program provides a prominent way of displaying your home's address that will save emergency personnel precious time in their responses. Additionally, these blue and white reflective markers are easier to see during evening hours or in bad weather conditions. Learn more here.

- **Saanich launches water meter upgrade to improve leak detection**: Saanich is starting a five-year project to upgrade water meter-reading equipment at about 30,000 properties across the community. The new Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) system will allow water meters to be read remotely, providing more timely water-use information and helping the District identify unusual water use that may indicate a leak. Learn more here, and from this piece from CTV News.

- **Housing Targets**: Staff presented Council with a report on the District's work towards the provincial Housing Targets at our November 23rd meeting. As reported in the TC, "from Oct. 1, 2025, to Sept. 30, 2026, Saanich issued occupancy permits for 315 net new units, representing just 37 per cent of its annual target of 841. Over three years, Saanich has produced 1,132 net new housing units, representing 60 per cent of its cumulative target of

1,882." Our overall target is 4,610 net new housing units by 2028, and this represents only 75% of the actual anticipated housing need in our community. While there is uncertainty about the future of housing targets and other provincial housing regulations given the change in government following the most recent provincial election, the need for housing in our community is still pressing.

- **Saanich staff recognized for provincial leadership in asset management**: I was excited to see Jacqueline Weston, the District's Asset Management Program Manager, have her amazing work recognized by Asset Management BC (AMBC) with the Wally Wells Award. Learn more here. The award recognizes one person in British Columbia each year for strong leadership, passion and excellence in asset management. Asset management is critical to ensuring that the infrastructure we have in the District is properly maintained, thereby greatly extending its life and ensuring that it is replaced before it fails catastrophically.

- **Federal and municipal funding accelerates restoration of Cuthbert Holmes Park**: A major ecological restoration project that will transform Cuthbert Holmes Park, received funding from the Government of Canada through the Federation of Canadian Municipalities' (FCM) Growing Canada's Community Canopies (GCCC) initiative ($760,000). This project will bring thousands of new trees, renewed wildlife habitat and healthier salmon-bearing waters to the park for generations to come. Learn more here.

- **Saanich receives funding to establish a restoration plan for Rithet's Bog**: We were awarded a grant ($70,000) from the FCMs' Green Municipal Fund (GMF) through the Local Leadership for Climate Adaptation (LLCA) initiative. The funding will go towards establishing a restoration plan and cost estimate for Rithet's Bog Conservation Park. Learn more here.

- **The Spectrum turf field is complete**: The field replaces grass fields plagued by uneven surfaces and drainage issues that left school teams unable to host home games at Spectrum for 15 years. The project was supported in part by the District of Saanich. Learn more here.



I had the pleasure of attending a learning and networking session hosted by the Centre for Civic Governance in Nanaimo last weekend. It was a great opportunity to connect with progressive municipal folks from across Vancouver Island.

Ongoing Saanich Engagement

- **Crosswalk Safety Review:** Saanich is a Vision Zero community that is working to deliver safe, healthy, and convenient travel options for Saanich residents. As part of our Road Safety Action Plan, we are conducting a community-wide Crosswalk Safety Review, a technical study to help the District to understand the level of safety at midblock and uncontrolled crosswalks located in Saanich.

  The purpose of the Crosswalk Safety Review is to examine the current safety conditions of mid-block and uncontrolled crosswalks and determine potential improvements that may provide safer crossing conditions. Learn more and share your thoughts here on the Hello Saanich platform. I took the survey and it gives you the ability to provide targeted feedback on up to five crosswalks. It's well worth taking a few minutes to review.

- **Community Vitality Plan**: Saanich Parks, Recreation and Community Services' is inviting residents and community members to learn more about and provide input on the PRCS Community Vitality Plan (CVP). The CVP is being developed as a 10-year-framework that will guide how the PRCS Department prioritizes work, investments, and approaches to create positive outcomes for residents. The five goals of the CVP are to promote belonging, inclusion and access; connect people with nature; foster active living at all stages of life; provide supportive spaces and places; and increase value to the community through greater capacity. Learn more and share your thoughts here on the Hello Saanich platform.



It was an honour to attend Saanich's Remembrance Day Ceremony. I was particularly pleased with the enormous turn out and inclusive nature of the ceremony..

Family Doctors for Saanich



It was a pleasure to finally meet Tod Maffin in person at a recent event in Victoria. I'm grateful for all of his work bringing more healthcare professionals to our island and hope to set some of those folks up in Saanich clinics!

I had occasion to attempt to navigate our health care system without a family doctor (for a minor issue) this month, and it was an incredibly frustrating process. While I've been passionate about connecting more residents with primary care, this experience underscored for me the importance

of the work of the Family Doctors for Saanich campaign!

This term, getting more Saanich residents connected to primary care will be a major priority of mine, particularly given some of the limitations I may face in advancing other priorities. Top of my list is exploring the possibility of setting up a municipal clinic, similar to what we've seen done in Langford, Colwood, View Royal, and Esquimalt. Please stay tuned for more on this work and other initiatives of the Family Doctors for Saanich campaign, and a huge thank you to everyone who has been volunteering on this campaign.

Reproductive Justice Advocacy



Things have been uncertain at the provincial and federal levels, and AccessBC has been monitoring the situation to better understand what next steps we should take. We have temporarily paused our 'Not Just A Pinch' pain management campaign as we reorganize internally and get a better understanding of the new BC government's stance towards reproductive health issues. We are also disappointed at the ongoing failure of the federal government to advance universal pharmacare across Canada, and are planning further work on this issue. I will keep folks in the loop as we re-adjust in the face of changing circumstances. As always, if you are interested in getting involved, please get in touch!

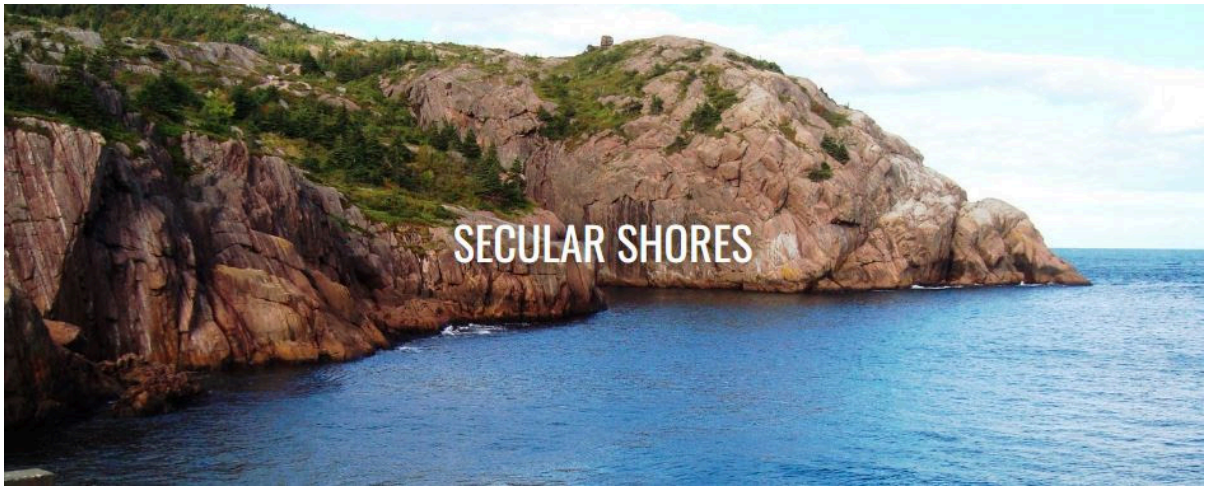
For those who might have missed it, tune into this interview I gave about the AccessBC Campaign that aired on CJSF 90.1FM.

BC Humanist Research



It was another busy month for the BC Humanist Association Research Team. We have been churning out reports as part of our ongoing Saguenay Project, which explores unconstitutional prayer in Canadian municipalities. In late September, we release 'Amen Again: Revisiting Unconstitutional Prayers in Ontario Municipalities,' which explored prayer in Ontario municipalities. Of the 359 municipalities for which data were available, 62 (17.3%) included prayers in their 2022 inaugural meetings. While this represented a sharp decline from 2018, it remains the highest percentage across all provinces. We also identified two municipalities - Laurentian Valley and Pembroke - that routinely included prayer in their regular council meetings.

Ontario just wrapped up its most recent round of municipal elections, and our team will be following up with all Ontario municipalities to ensure they complied with *Saguenay*, and legal action will likely be considered against any that are found to be in violation of their duty of religious neutrality.



Our team also conducted a detailed survey of the agendas, minutes, and video recordings of the meetings of Newfoundland and Labrador municipalities with populations over 1,000, and I am pleased to announced that no ongoing unconstitutional prayers were identified. Despite being Canada's most religious province by measure of religious affiliations, Newfoundland and Labrador is the most secular province we have analyzed to date, with no prayers identified in any contemporary regular and inaugural council meetings. You can read more in our full report: "Secular Shores: A Review of Saguenay Compliance in Newfoundland and Labrador," which was published in late October.

Our team is currently working on investigations into two additional provinces: Nova Scotia and

British Columbia. Following the recent municipal elections in BC, our team has been scouring municipal inaugural meeting records to identify any municipalities that violated Saguenay. Thus far, we identified Clearwater prior to their inaugural and were able to warn them of their impending constitutional violation. We also identified two BC municipalities that violated their duty of religious neutrality in their 2026 inaugural meetings, and we are in the process of securing legal counsel to pursue the matter further. If you know of anyone who offers pro bono legal support who might be interested in a strong constitutional case, please get in touch!



It's been a busy and worrying time in Canadian and BC politics, and the BCHA is working on a lot of pressing issues, and I wanted to flag a few of these for you. Premier Lorne Doerkson and newly appointed Education Minister Lynne Block wasted no time announcing that Government websites had been expunged of all sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) materials and that SOGI was to be removed from all educational materials (see CTV News). SOGI materials were created in an effort to promote inclusion and acceptance of 2SLGBTQ+ students and address homophobia, transphobia, and bullying in schools. The Doerkson government expunged this material without an alternative plan and is clearly playing culture war politics with 2SLGBTQ+ students. This is unacceptable! Please take a moment to write your MLA and tell them where you stand.

Write Your MLA

And just today, the BCHA released statements pertaining to the Supreme Court of Canada decision on Bill 21, which is the Quebec legislation that bars many Quebec public sector employees in positions of authority, including public school teachers, from wearing "religious symbols" at work. The law pre-emptively invoked the Charter's notwithstanding clause. The Quebec Superior Court and Court of Appeal both upheld most of the law, largely because of that clause.

Little Free Libraries



In all the hubbub of the recent municipal election, I almost forgot to share this wonderful write up from The Seattle Times that showcased our region's growing little free library network! At last count, our region hosts over 1,076 of these amazing little public book boxes, with more that share puzzles, board games, plants, seeds, toys, art, and more!

Since 2017, I've had the pleasure of leading the Greater Victoria Placemaking Network's (GVPN) Pocket Places Project, which helps promote, map, stock, and build little free libraries across the region. The GVPN is holding its Annual General Meeting on Wednesday, December 2nd, 6:00-8:00 pm at the Esquimalt Gorge Park Pavilion (1070 Tillicum Road).

If you are interested in placemaking, I encourage you to come out. I'll be giving a short update on the Pocket Places Project and there's a keynote address by Mark Albany, a social worker, knowledge keeper, and educator from the Songhees Nation. If you are really interested in placemaking, please consider joining the GVPN Board, they are still looking for a few folks to help out! Learn more here.

I hope to see you many of you out at one of our upcoming Saanich Council meetings, and I hope you all have a lovely weekend.

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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