

Candidate Responses on Air Quality

Breathe Clean Air circulated a questionnaire on air quality to all Comox Valley candidates running in the local government elections in 2018. Multiple reminders were sent to candidates who did not respond. Responses have been collated by municipality or CVRD.

The questions are below and the responses from each candidate are summarized in a table afterwards, along with additional comments provided by some of the candidates. Please visit www.breathecleanair.ca/election2018 for more information.

QUESTIONS:

1. Concern about air quality:

Every winter, there is poor air quality in the Comox Valley due to high levels of harmful fine particulate matter. We experience multiple air quality advisories, and frequently break BC Air Quality Objectives. We are one of the worst communities of 13 monitored in the Georgia Strait Air Zone. In the Comox Valley, we know wood smoke is the source of most of our fine particulates (or "PM2.5").

Everyone's health can be impacted by poor air quality, particularly children, seniors and people with pre-existing conditions. Studies show these particulates increase the risk of heart attacks and strokes, increase the rate of respiratory infections and lung cancer, impact lung development in infants and children, and much more (see Doctors & Scientists Against Wood Smoke Pollution).

Q. 1 - Are you concerned about winter air quality in the Comox Valley and how it is affecting people's health?

2. Ensure multi-pronged strategies:

Mobile air monitoring studies in our area have shown that older neighbourhoods (where wood stove use is typically higher) experience the worst air quality in the Valley. Some areas showed poorer air quality than what was recorded at the government monitor at Courtenay Elementary School. The management of wood stove installation and use falls largely under local government control. Local governments can use a

diversity of approaches to help reduce wood stove pollution. For example, local governments can help raise awareness of the health impacts of wood smoke, support incentives for people to switch to cleaner fuels, prevent wood burning on bad air days, disallow new installations to stop the spread of wood stoves particularly in populated areas, and more. A range of approaches needs to be adopted to ensure success.

Q. 2 - If elected, do you commit to ensuring meaningful, multi-pronged strategies for reducing wood stove pollution are created and implemented?

3. Agree certified stoves not best approach:

Research in the UK has shown that even a brand new eco-certified stove, burning dry wood at high temperatures, will emit more harmful fine particulate matter per hour than 18 newer diesel cars. A government agency in Puget Sound indicates that a well run EPA certified wood stove puts out 582 times more fine particulates a year than a gas furnace or stove. Unlike healthier heating options (e.g. gas and electricity), emissions from a wood stove depend completely on how it is operated. Wood stoves require ongoing public spending for education on burning and for enforcement (when people burn inappropriate materials or create undue amounts of smoke).

Q. 3 - Do you agree that replacing older wood stoves with newer, certified stoves is not the best approach for reducing wood stove pollution in populated areas?

4. Ensure bylaws to protect from poor burning?

Individuals who burn wet wood or other illegal materials, or who do not use their stove appropriately, will create notably more smoke pollution than people who burn dry wood in hot fires. Neighbours of wood stove users can be exposed to very different pollution levels.

Local governments have the authority to develop and enforce nuisance-like bylaws to protect people's use and enjoyment of their own property, and their health and well-being. This is done for noise and other disturbances.

Q. 4 - If elected, do you commit to ensuring there are workable and fair bylaws that will help neighbours protect their families and property from harmful amounts of smoke created by poor burning practices?

5. Support end to yard waste burning?

Burning of yard waste, including leaves and branches, is regulated by local governments. These yard waste fires create a lot of harmful localized smoke, impacting neighbours' use and enjoyment of their own property as well as their health.

Although yard waste fires have been banned in Comox, Courtenay and Cumberland, they are allowed in the rest of CVRD. *(BC regulates larger open burns and agricultural waste fires and these are not the focus of this question).*

Q. 5 - Do you support an end to yard waste burning in CVRD, particularly in more densely populated areas that fall outside of municipal boundaries?

Comox Valley Regional District (by area)

Name	Running	1. Concerned about AQ?	2. Ensure Multi-prong strategies?	3. Agree Certified stoves not best approach?	4. Ensure bylaws to protect from poor burning?	5. Support end to yard waste burning?	Comments
Daniel Arbour	Area A	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Thanks for this initiative. Living in a rural area, I have a wood stove, which we recently upgraded. Many houses that are not well insulated and older struggle with alternative heat sources, so I think we need to work a multi-year plan. Many people can't afford quick transitions. As for yard wastes, there are rules for commercial burns in regards to venting index. I think there should be an education campaign about the value of composting yard waste, and perhaps a feasibility to look at applying commercial yard permits to residential zones. On Hornby Island our Fire Department has been great at updating the population about "good burn days" vs "bad burn days".
Jim Elliott	Area A	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	none
Arzeena Hamir	Area B	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	It seems we need a transition plan. An abrupt stop to using woodstoves will not work in the valley, in my humble opinion. I would love to work with Clean Air to transition households to better energy sources. From a climate change point of view, oil cannot be part of this transition. I think you'll agree that the forest fires in the summer (and the factors that caused them) must be dealt with as well. Thank-you for putting forward this questionnaire.
Rod Nichol	Area B	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	There is no question poor quality wood burning is a real problem. Low income families may not be able to upgrade. What is your definition of more densely populated rural areas. I agree wood burning is a problem but we need much more public input from the community as a whole before we make any bylaws prohibiting woodstoves.
Jay Oddleifson	Area C	Y	Y	Y	N	N	none
<i>Edwin Grieve</i>	<i>Area C</i>	<i>DID NOT RESPOND to survey</i>					

Y == Yes N= No n/r = no response (question skipped)

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Town of Comox

Name	Running	1. Concerned about AQ?	2. Ensure Multi-prong strategies?	3. Agree Certified stoves not best approach?	4. Ensure bylaws to protect from poor burning?	5. Support end to yard waste burning?	Comments
Russ Arnott	Mayor	Y	Y	Y	Y	n/r	none
Tom Diamond	Mayor	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Let's do it!
Alex Bissinger	Council	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	<p>Q3- while I do agree there are more efficient ways to heat a home via gas or electricity, it is not always straight forward to make a conversion and can sometimes be cost prohibitive. Therefore I support initiatives such as the Wood Stove Replacement program that offers rebates for replacing old wood stoves with new high efficiency heating sources (wood gas or electric) for residents who cannot practically convert or afford otherwise.</p> <p>Q5 as for open burning fires within CVRD, there could be an opportunity to only allow them on certain days, such as how wood smoke is only allowed in Comox when the ventilation index is good, or have it regulated by permits, where residents have to demonstrate the need for burning. Agricultural businesses have a lot of challenges already and farming is scarce enough in the valley that i would want to discuss with farmers what impact such a ban would have on them before imposing additional restrictions or creating more obstacles.</p>
Don Davis	Council	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	none
Ron J. Freeman	Council	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	<p>In response to the question about replacing wood stoves with newer stoves, while it may not be the best solution, at least it is a step in the right direction. Personally I have not been as concerned about this area as I have been about some of the other pressing issues in the valley. Now that it is on my radar I will do what I can to educate myself more. There are many issues that need to be addressed in order to make the Comox Valley a healthier place for everyone.</p>
Chris Haslett	Council	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	none

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Stephanie McGowan	Council	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	I think as much research as possible would be needed to make sure that we make the most effective decisions. Wood burning and yard waste burning are absolutely contributing to our air quality, but we also need to be sure that the citizens can access alternatives and can afford those alternatives. Overall, without clean air and clean water, a community can not thrive.
Nicole Minions	Council	Y	Y	Y	Y	n/r	none
Pat McKenna	Council	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	thanks for the opportunity to fill out your survey. I have some feedback. At each question please allow the candidate to explain their answer as a simple yes or no doesn't always fit every situation.
Maureen Swift	Council	Y	Y	Y	n/r	Y	I can't make any guarantees as I am only one vote at the table. I will commit to finding measures to improve air quality but I believe that the issue is one that needs commitment from the entire region. Thank you for all you are doing to work towards a better environment for everyone.
<i>Ken Grant</i>	<i>Council</i>	<i>DID NOT RESPOND to survey</i>					

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City of Courtenay

Name	Running	1. Concerned about AQ?	2. Ensure Multi-prong strategies?	3. Agree Certified stoves not best approach?	4. Ensure bylaws to protect from poor burning?	5. Support end to yard waste burning?	Comments
Erik Eriksson	Mayor	Y	Y	n/r	n/r	n/r	none
Larry Jangula	Mayor	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	<p>There has been a good deal of discussion on this matter in the past two years. The City of Courtenay has banned open burning, including burning for the purposes of land clearing since 2008. Last December our Council passed a motion to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bring all wood burning appliances within the City into compliance with current Federal CSA and Provincial standards within two years. - Provide residents who demonstrate financial need with interest-free loans to enable them to update their appliance. - Homes sold with wood burning appliances are now required to confirm that it conforms to the latest Federal and Provincial certifications and emissions standards, or replace it with a compliant model. - Create Municipal regulations and guidelines outlining the types of fuels allowed to be burned within the City of Courtenay. - Advocate with the Town of Comox, Village of Cumberland and the CVRD to adopt similar regulations. <p>In addition I and the City have been lobbying the Province and the Regional District to restrict slash burning in the areas surrounding the City of Courtenay.</p>
Harold James Long	Mayor	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	A lot of home owners with lower incomes use wood for house hold savings. That is the reason I would not consider a total ban.
Bob Wells	Mayor	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	I think there are opportunities to partner with Island Health to go beyond wood stove replacement programs. Targeting problem neighbourhoods with education and enforcement as well as larger grants to help people move to cleaner forms of heating whenever possible.
Will Cole-Hamilton	Council	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	none
Brennan Day	Council	Y	Y	n/r	Y	Y	none

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Darwin Dzuba	Council	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	As a pilot I often see smoke from 100 Km's away drifting into the valley. We need to ban open slash burning from all of Vancouver Island, in order to make a significant improvement in air quality.
David Frisch	Council	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	none
Tom Grant	Council	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	none
Doug Hillian	Council	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Although not sitting on the Regional Board, I have supported development of an Air Quality Advisory Council to address recommended actions. My son is asthmatic so air quality is a significant issue for me.
Kiyoshi Kosky	Council	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	<p>The City of Courtenay plays an integral role in facilitating and contributing to clean air in the valley. Clean air is a community issue requiring a collective, collaborative, and long-term solution. The Official Community Plan speaks to solving this issue, with its provisions for improving residents' quality of life and combating climate change. There are many potential solutions for addressing this important issue, which affects the health and well-being of the citizens in Courtenay. One solution would be for the municipality to introduce a bylaw for all new builds prohibiting the installation of wood stoves.</p> <p>The issue of transitioning to heating alternatives would require both public consultation and an inventory assessment of wood stoves in the City. Additionally, Courtenay should lobby the Regional District and Province for a complete ban on brush burning in valley. Alternative options for farms and the forestry industry to deal with waste would need to be facilitated. The Regional District, BC government, and BC Hydro offer subsidies to switch to heat pumps. Cumberland, CVRD, and Comox should be lobbied to adopt the same policy. Finding a solution to the issue of wood smoke would align perfectly with the Regional Growth Strategy goals of public health, safety, and addressing climate change at the local level. The wood stove solution is also congruent with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, which Canada has committed to fulfilling.</p>
Jin Lin	Council	Y	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/r	none

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Penny Marlow	Council	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Everyone needs clean air to breathe and live. Legislation is not the best way to ensure high air quality is achieved in the valley. Our air is affected by activities outside the control of our region and, as we saw with the smoke this past summer, from activities around the world. Air quality becomes a global issue. Therefore, we must also look to education and negotiation to help solve this problem. Yet, we must begin to act locally by controlling open burning and minimizing the use of wood stoves. We should be composting rather than having open burning. Through financial incentives, we can encourage replacement of wood stoves in existing homes and eliminate them in new homes. Thank you for the opportunity to respond to your questions. I hope that I can rely on your members to support my campaign to be a City of Courtenay Councillor. I want to make Courtenay a great place for all of us to live, work and play. Through collaboration and teamwork, we can make this happen.
Melanie McCollum	Council	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	This is an important issue and education of public and politicians is critical to improving our winter air quality.
Wendy Morin	Council	Y	Y	N	Y	N	I would like to see incentives for people who choose to replace wood burning stoves with alternative heat sources.
Judi Murakami	Council	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Educating citizens is key to making changes. Perhaps realtors could ensure that one of the requirements to passing inspection is either no wood burning stove or a certified high efficiency stove.
J. Murray Presley	Council	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	none
Deana Simkin	Council	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Concerns with air quality have to be rectified mindfully. Placing a significant financial burden on citizens with wood burning stoves as a heat source would be irresponsible. Education is important to those that already burn wood and cleaner heat sources are important for new builds and renovations.
Manno Theos	Council	Y	Y	n/r	Y	Y	none
Starr Winchester	Council	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	none

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Village of Cumberland

Name	Running	1. Concerned about AQ?	2. Ensure Multi-prong strategies?	3. Agree Certified stoves not best approach?	4. Ensure bylaws to protect from poor burning?	5. Support end to yard waste burning?	Comments
Leslie Baird	Mayor	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Fortis Gas has new programs for people to remove wood stoves. Please have people go online and register if they do not have access to gas lines.
Eduardo Uranga	Mayor	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	We need to publicly acknowledge that we have a very critical health-threatening air quality problem in the Comox Valley in the heating months, and we need to implement effective policies to replace all wood-burning appliances with a non-polluting heating appliance. A natural gas furnace is not a good choice, a heat pump is.
Vickey Brown	Council	Y	y	n/r	Y	n/r	I would very much like to work with the provincial government to end slash pile burning in our communities.
Jesse Anne Ketler	Council	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	During this past term, Cumberland has taken some important steps to improving air quality in the Valley including banning backyard burning, banned the installation of wood burning fireplaces in new homes, requiring the use of alternative heat sources during air quality advisories and providing education/materials (incl. moisture meters) to promote clean burning practices. I recognize that many residents would like to stop contributing to the air quality problem but do not have the financial means to upgrade their woodstoves to more efficient forms of heating. To help resolve this I would like to strengthen partnerships with Fortis or BC Hydro to provide affordable, alternative forms of heating. I would also like to investigate the use of Cumberland's mines as a source of geothermal or heat-exchange for district heating as they have done at the VIU campus in Nanaimo.
Roger Kishi	Council	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Village of Cumberland has been working on many of the items mentioned in this survey. Council and staff continue to work on this issue, including drafting a bylaw to not allow wood burning appliances for new construction.
Eric Krejci	Council	Y	Y	n/r	n/r	n/r	none

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Ian McLean		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Its always tough to say yes to questions that need explanation, creating Bylaws that are fair also need to be regulated and that's when it becomes tough, every question also has to have a solution. Saying yes to no improved woodstoves isn't easy, what we should be saying is there needs to be incentives to contractor's who do not put in wood stoves but use alternate heat sources and not oil, I am not a fan of site "c" but lets hope that any revenue generated can be utilized for rebates to move people from wood or oil and move them to clean sources of heat.
Gwyn Sproule	Council	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	none
Sean Sullivan	Council	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	none

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