

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?

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

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

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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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