

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?

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

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

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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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