

Candidate Responses on Air Quality: City of Courtenay

Breathe Clean Air circulated a questionnaire on air quality to all candidates running in the local government elections in the Comox Valley in 2026.

This document shares results from candidates in the City of Courtenay. Please visit our website at www.breathcleanair.ca/election2026 for responses from candidates in other areas.

The questions and responses from each candidate are below, along with additional comments provided by some of the candidates.

Notes on the questionnaire and results:

- *All candidates were sent at least one reminder to complete the survey.*
- *Many candidates replied to the survey in full. A few did not, while others skipped certain questions. All questions to which a candidate did not reply are marked "didn't reply."*
- *Candidates who had no publicly available online contact details, or whose details could not be found, are marked as "no contact info."*
- *Candidates' responses are provided in full and are unedited.*

Question 1

Every winter, the Comox Valley experiences poor air quality due to high levels of harmful fine particulate matter from wood stoves. We experience 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. Everyone's health can be impacted by poor air quality, particularly children, seniors, and people with pre-existing conditions.

Are you concerned about wood smoke in the Comox Valley and how it is affecting people's health?

COURTENAY

Name	Answer	Comments
<i>Mayoral candidates</i>		
Manno Theos	Didn't reply	
Trish McPhail	Didn't reply	
Bob Wells	Yes	
<i>Councillor candidates</i>		
Philip Adams	Didn't reply	
John Dacombe	Yes	I am very concerned about air quality in the Comox Valley. With climate change we can expect more wildfires and thus more PM2.5.
Evan Jolicoeur	Yes	Absolutely, as a RN by training, and someone who personally lives with a disability that is impact, by among other things, poor air quality. We hear regularly about the impacts of poor air quality, including the rise of impacts of wild fire smoke.
Darin Tuffs		With respect to your questions about wood burning stoves in the Comox Valley. In an engineering capacity how is it the city in the past has and keeps building large buildings along the water front of our beautiful city, causing air flow to be mitigated into the valley. For the most part wind has had a tendency to flow into the valley from the Salish sea. Having these buildings blocking the air flow impedes proper channels of any smoke or carcinogens from dissipating. Not that I'm against having wood burning stoves, I've come to realize an engineering of proper buildings in the city will prevent stagnation of air flow during the winter months
David Frisch	Yes	Yes, I am still concerned for those who suffer from poor air quality, and I understand how debilitating it can be for those with health issues of all ages.
Benny Benvenuti	Didn't reply	
Dick Clancy	Didn't reply	
Rosanna Chamberlin	Didn't reply	

Jin Lin	Yes	Wood smoke affect to health problems in lungs, heart, irritation caused by chemical pollution. Particular, affect to children and infants, older adults, people with illnesses.
Erik Eriksson	Didn't reply	
Wendy Morin	Didn't reply	
Jesse Lightburn	Didn't reply	
Kelly Matthews	Didn't reply	
Thomas McDevitt	Didn't reply	
David Mellin	Didn't reply	
Kitty Pitt	Didn't reply	
Davina Singh	Yes	As a person who suffers from season asthma due to air quality I physically feel the impact of this in the colder months. Those who suffer from health conditions can be financially impacted by the need for expensive inhalers to simply breath.
Kam Singhanian	Didn't reply	

Question 2

The development of the Comox Valley Airshed Roundtable Action Plan involved local governments, health authorities, industry groups, environmental non-profits, and community members. The plan's goals include a reduction of existing wood-burning appliances and their emissions, a transition away from wood-burning appliances in densely populated areas, along with a reduction of yard waste burning, promotion of alternatives, and expanded research data on particulate mater.

If elected, will you work toward fulfilling the 2023 Comox Valley Airshed Roundtable Action Plan?

COURTENAY

Name	Answer	Comments
<i>Mayoral candidates</i>		
Manno Theos	Didn't reply	
Trish McPhail	Didn't reply	
Bob Wells	Yes	
<i>Councillor candidates</i>		
Darin Tufts	Didn't reply	
Philip Adams	Didn't reply	
John Dacombe	Yes	Yes, I absolutely support this action plan.
Evan Jolicoeur	Yes	Absolutely - we are almost there and have achieved some actions but we need to get it over the finish line.
Kam Singhania	Didn't reply	
David Frisch	Yes	Yes, as I supported its creation
Benny Benvenuti	Didn't reply	
Dick Clancy	Didn't reply	
Rosanna Chamberlin	Didn't reply	
Jin Lin	Yes	Yes, if the project is aiming on to improve local air quality, and I'll do my best to learn more of the project.
Erik Eriksson	Didn't reply	
Wendy Morin	Didn't reply	
Jesse Lightburn	Didn't reply	
Kelly Matthews	Didn't reply	
Thomas McDevitt	Didn't reply	

David Mellin	Didn't reply	
Kitty Pitt	Didn't reply	
Davina Singh	Yes	Yes, I believe it's important that we continue to work on improving air quality in more densely populated areas. With the promotion of cleaner options and provincial and regional programs offering rebates and funding for upgrades there has been a marked improvement in air quality in the last 5 years .

Question 3

To help ensure the wood smoke problem does not get any worse, all three municipalities passed bylaws to prevent wood stoves from being installed in new construction. In Comox and Courtenay, the bylaws also say homes that do not already have a wood-burning appliance are not allowed to install one. These bylaws effectively cap the number of wood stoves in these municipalities, helping to ensure the problem does not get any worse.

If elected, do you commit to keeping your municipality's "no new installation" bylaws in place to prevent the increase in the number of wood burning appliances?

COURTENAY

Name	Answer	Comments
<i>Mayoral candidates</i>		
Manno Theos	Didn't reply	
Trish McPhail	Didn't reply	
Bob Wells	Yes	
<i>Councillor candidates</i>		
Darin Tufts	Didn't reply	
Philip Adams	Didn't reply	
John Dacombe	Yes	Yes, I support the current bylaws in Courtenay regarding wood-burning appliances.
Evan Jolicoeur	Yes	Yes - not interested in going back. We have made good progress and we can continue to support folks who do have wood fire burning through education & incentives.
Kam Singhania	Didn't reply	
David Frisch	Yes	I am happy to continue to support the transition to fully electric homes and businesses.
Benny Benvenuti	Didn't reply	
Dick Clancy	Didn't reply	
Rosanna Chamberlin	Didn't reply	
Jin Lin	Yes	I agreed with no new installation of wood burning appliances. In fact, I have started to stop tourists to use wood burning fire pit since 2015 in Maple Pool Campsite.
Erik Eriksson	Didn't reply	
Wendy Morin	Didn't reply	
Jesse Lightburn	Didn't reply	
Kelly Matthews	Didn't reply	

Thomas McDevitt	Didn't reply	
David Mellin	Didn't reply	
Kitty Pitt	Didn't reply	
Davina Singh	No	While I know that the reduction of the number of inefficient wood burning appliances directly correlates to improvements to our air quality, I believe an elected official should act on behalf of the community as a whole. If there is a significant appeal for access to wood burning appliances I think it would be reasonable to consider bylaw amendments allowing the installation of newer more efficient wood burning appliances, with guidelines and parameters for approval.

Question 4

Our summers are increasingly vulnerable to wildfire smoke. The danger to property and the potential for lost lives is real. While our ability to reduce wildfires in the summer is bound up with much larger climate change issue, our ability to reduce the same kind of smoke hazard in the winter is within our reach.

If elected, what will you do to reduce winter wood smoke pollution in the Comox Valley?

COURTENAY

Name	Answer	Comments
<i>Mayoral candidates</i>		
Manno Theos	Didn't reply	
Trish McPhail	Didn't reply	
Bob Wells	Yes	Install and encourage others to install air quality monitors to find the hot spots, to have bylaw or ambassadors work with homeowners burning woods incorrectly or using unseasoned wood.
<i>Councillor candidates</i>		
Darin Tufts	Didn't reply	
Philip Adams	Didn't reply	
John Dacombe	Yes	My detailed, costed platform at johndacombe.ca includes vigorous language regarding increased enforcement of existing bylaws, with fines, not warning after warning. This includes enforcement against properties violating air quality, either with illegal backyard burns or substandard woodstove usage because of burning inappropriate materials or inappropriate equipment. Fines work to change anti-social behaviour like this. Warnings don't.
Evan Jolicoeur		Continue to fund the above plan, and explore more education, upgrade purple air monitors where required and continue to find partnerships with schools and private land owners for these monitors to be implemented across the community
Kam Singhania	Didn't reply	
David Frisch		I'm keen to promote educating people with wood stoves, at the Regional District level, of available grants and incentives to switch to electric.
Benny Benvenuti	Didn't reply	
Dick Clancy	Didn't reply	
Rosanna Chamberlin	Didn't reply	

Jin Lin		Many properties in rural area are still using wood burning fireplace for heating house in winter, many of houses are old. Some of properties owners are seniors and cannot afford to upgraded the wood fireplaces into heat pump system. If the properties owners know that to keep fires hot and small, use dry firewood and limit usage during extreme weather or when power outage, all can help to reduce the smoke pollution. Inspect and clean chimney annually help too. Yard open burning definitely is not a good way to get rid of wood waste, instead of, take them to CV Waste Management for turning into compost.
Erik Eriksson	Didn't reply	
Wendy Morin	Didn't reply	
Jesse Lightburn	Didn't reply	
Kelly Matthews	Didn't reply	
Thomas McDevitt	Didn't reply	
David Mellin	Didn't reply	
Kitty Pitt	Didn't reply	
Davina Singh		If elected I would encourage the continuation and growth of education programs for constituents regarding air quality improvements they can make at home.