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Mayor & Council,
District of Metchosin
4450 Happy Valley Road,
Victoria, B.C.
mayorandcouncil@metchosin.ca

Community Planning & Natural Areas Committee,

Re: Considerations with respect to the fate of our 'Buffer Lands'

As I am certain you are aware, this letter on tonight's Correspondence agenda was submitted to Mayor and Council on December 18th. As it is still highly relevant I asked Staff to resubmit a slightly modified for tonight's Committee meetings. With your indulgence, I would like to read this submission for the benefit of those who cannot attend or participate directly this evening. I would also like to add two short bits that have recently come to light and will keep it as brief as I possibly can.

First off - on behalf of the Executive of the APRM, I would like to commend Council on your recent adoption of a resolution to make decisions and adopt policies that recognize the global Climate Emergency and Biodiversity Crisis. This is a great starting point and perhaps now is the time to put it to the test in the context of Metchosin's Buffer Lands.

It is something of a revelation to finally be advised of Langford's commitment (according to the land swap agreement), to ensure the integrity of aquifer 606 and similarly affected water courses such as Metchosin Creek, by way of significant infrastructure to be installed within our Buffer Land zone.

The perceived need for this term of the agreement is completely understandable, but it begs the following questions, i.e., Who exactly will be installing the required infrastructure? What will it consist of, i.e., how invasive will it be? When is it scheduled to take place and at what stage with respect to Langford's development plans on the upper terrain? Most importantly, who will monitor this trespass and associated activity to ensure that it will meet Metchosin's standards and expectations? Further, what plan does Metchosin have to deter (eliminate?) public access from the Langford side so that our 'buffer lands' do not become a 'park of convenience' for Langford's adjacent, high density, soon-to-be residential development. Under the circumstances it seems prudent to request a detailed action plan from Langford addressing these concerns. On a further note, it might well be a consideration to challenge the validity of the 'Covenant' placed on these lands as it was not publicly disclosed during the land swap negotiations nor the subsequent referendum. A legal opinion may possibly be in order.

I will conclude by stating that we have solid reason to believe that the concept of moving forward to a dedicated conservation area (likely assisted by federal funding) for our Buffer Lands, has significant uptake within our community.

Metchosin is once again looking for leadership here. A prolonged public consultation period, i.e., until the latter part of 2023, re: the ultimate fate of our lands in question, could cause Metchosin to lose this opportunity. One can be reasonably sure that our neighbouring municipality of Langford will be keen to start on their 'Business Park' and high-density residential development, before we even get to the table. That said, if a way can be found to expedite the public consultation process it would serve Metchosin well. As a minimum, the new federal Climate Emergency Program should be an integral part of any public engagement process.

We ask that Mayor and Council take these questions and points into serious consideration in your upcoming deliberations and actions.

Two extra points: With respect to a comment made at a previous Council/Committee meeting in regards to the ‘lack of first growth trees’ on the lands in question – I sincerely doubt that Metchosin has any left … but curious thing about trees …‘left to their own devices’ … they grow – it is probably time that we collectively start to think about the next generation and the one after that in this context.

Secondly: As reported in the T/C some 10 days ago, the federally, potentially funded, conservation spaces have recently been applied to a parcel at Sidney Spit for a parcel as small as 11 acres, I believe it was to protect a small wetland … just thought you should know.

Sincerely,

Chris Moehr
President, APRM