

**ADDRESS TO CVRD COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
RE: BUDGET FOR REGIONAL PARKLAND ACQUISITION**

Presented: 26 January 2023

Thank you for this opportunity for comment on the CVRD's budget for 2023.

Over the years, I have followed the gyrations of annual funding for parkland acquisition with concern and frequent disappointment. In 2006 I was a member of the Parks and Trails Master Plan public advisory group. Our group received hundreds of submissions from the wider public in support of acquiring lands for both recreation and ecosystem protection. Public engagement in those days was in a word—**passionate!**

Based on the results of a statistically valid population sample, consultants found 76% of tax payers were willing to pay between \$10 and \$50+ per year in dedicated taxes for park acquisition.¹ That sentiment was further reinforced by a referendum in November 2008.

In reaching out to voters, the CVRD literature of the day promised that a taxation amount of \$5 per \$100,000 assessed residential property value would raise \$715,000 per year.² This did not dissuade voters at all. The vote elicited over 70% approval.³ (How many politicians can claim that kind of approval rating?)

Since then, I don't think the public appetite for regional parks has dimmed. Recent communication with CVRD park's staff indicates that public usage is up over 40% in the last two years. Current enthusiasm for regional parks goes well beyond just recreational access.

Now more than ever, the "*climate emergency*" imposes upon us the responsibility to recognize the existential importance of biodiversity and ecosystem services. Science is telling us that investment in natural infrastructure actually saves society money.⁴

So when deliberating on the regional parks acquisition budget, consider this not as a frivolous green expense but as an investment in critical infrastructure and a mainstay of economic resilience into our uncertain future. Investment in parks will help climate-proof Cowichan.

Please choose to invest in Parkland Acquisition funding to the maximum requisition limit—that is, \$5 per \$100,000 assessed residential property value.

1 CVRD Parks and Trails Master Plan, Appendix B, Lanarc Consultants Ltd., March 2007.

2 CVRD Regional Parkland Acquisition Fund Fact Sheet, October 2008.

3 "Are you in favour of the Board of the Cowichan Valley Regional District adopting CVRD Bylaw No. 3163 — Regional Parkland Acquisition Fund Services Establishment Bylaw, 2008 to establish an acquisition fund to provide for the expenditures in respect to acquiring regional parkland within the Cowichan Valley Regional District?"

4 The Nature Conservancy, "Natural Infrastructure," June 2022,

<https://www.nature.org/en-us/about-us/who-we-are/how-we-work/policy/natural-infrastructure/>