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Week #376 of the *Voice*

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Housing & Community
Issue

West Shore
Voice

News

v2

6 pages
this issue

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Release Date April 7, 2018

Friday, April 6, 2018

Langford grapples with multi-faceted housing crisis

● A groundswell of discontent was articulated at Langford Council this week over the housing crisis, with finger-pointing directed toward the BC NDP Government's speculation tax in particular. Particularly in social media there had been a public and political vocal backlash about the speculation tax that had room to grow for about five weeks between rollout of Budget 2018 and a fuller explanation of tax implementation. That sentiment was brought vocally to the April 3 Langford council meeting by developers and others with real estate interests. It wasn't your average homeowner who spoke up, but those who develop land, construct the housing, and sell homes. Langford council wrapped it up by passing a motion to send a letter to Premier John Horgan and Finance Minister Carole James expressing concerns about the speculation tax, and requesting that Langford be exempt from the speculation tax. Council went on further to agree about taking the exemption motion to the Capital Regional District (CRD) board for consideration, where Langford is one municipal voice among 13.

Naturally, in the wake of the new mortgage 'stress test' by which prospective homebuyers must qualify for mortgage insurance at a higher rate than actual current rates (just in case rates go up), much active interest in home purchasing has already been challenged. That frontline mortgage lending requirement became effective January 1, 2018 but started impacting potential buyers and real estate market activity as early as September 2017 (first upward as people scrambled, and then down as reality hit). The cost to build housing (single family homes, townhomes, condos, duplexes, and so on) and the prices at which market homes must sell... these are economic issues of supply and demand. For several years now the escalating price of homes in the south Vancouver Island area has put homeownership continually beyond the reach of average working people -- even with two incomes in the family. The pushback is coming not just from those who will be directly affected by the tax that sees vacant homes taxed at various rates depending on geographical location of the home and its owner. It's also from the developers who produce homes and rely on a marketplace that can afford them, including Realtors who will feel the squeeze in trying to sell continually more costly homes. In Langford, a large number of residents are homeowners (somewhere between 60% and 70%). Clearly leading Langford in its fast-paced economic growth in recent years, Langford Mayor Stew Young said at council April 3 that Langford attracts investment from outside the region as a way to help the economy. He made it clear that the speculation tax is already spooking would-be buyers from Alberta and beyond. Young feels that other Canadians should not be pushed away from BC, that the tax was supposedly intended to eliminate speculation by foreign buyers. Short presentations to council were made by Victoria Real Estate Board (VREB) president Kyle Kerr, Westhills Land Corp's manager of real estate sales & marketing Dale Sproule, Keycorp Developments owner Jim Hartshorne, and others. All of them challenged the BC speculation tax and emphasized the need for the provincial government to focus on providing ways to bolster the supply side of the housing equation. More houses built, more sales transacted, more people with a roof over their heads.



Langford seeks exemption from the BC Speculation Tax



Langford Mayor Stew Young has serious concerns about the impact of the BC speculation tax on housing prices and the people who buy homes for future retirement in the west shore.

BC SPECULATION TAX RATE STRUCTURE

- British Columbians who own vacant homes in designated urban centres will pay 0.5% on the property value in 2018 and beyond.
- The tax rate for Canadians who don't reside in BC will start at 0.5% in 2018, increasing to 1% in 2019 and beyond.
- Foreign investors and satellite families will pay 0.5% in 2018 then up to 2% in 2019.



Kyle Kerr, president, Victoria Real Estate Board

Average Sale Prices March 2018

GV = Greater Victoria

Single Family Homes

GV: \$903,052
Colwood: \$754,867
Langford: \$723,450
Sooke: \$554,704

Townhomes

GV: \$582,849
Colwood: \$601,829
Langford: \$521,368
Sooke: no sales

Condos

GV: \$477,814
Colwood: \$369,613
Langford: \$384,142
Sooke: no sales

www.vreb.org

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RCMP Wall of Honour: remembering Cst Sarah Beckett

West Shore Voice News



Cst Matt Baker addressed fellow West Shore RCMP Detachment members, mayors and the family of Cst Sarah Beckett at an unveiling for the detachment's new Wall of Honour, on the second anniversary of Beckett's death.

● A small but significant and heart-felt gathering was held in memory of Cst Sarah Beckett, with the unveiling of the new Wall of Honour in the lobby at the West Shore RCMP Detachment in Langford on Thursday, April 5. And while that was going on indoors at noon, members of the public had placed flowers and mementoes at the memorial outside the building. .../

continued on page 5 ... /

Another golf season coming up in Sooke

by Mary P Brooke
West Shore Voice News

● Nine holes take about an hour. Do that twice, and get 18 holes for \$15 if you're a senior. It's \$15 for regular adult admission for 9 holes on the Par 3 course, and \$10 for youth (8-16 yr). That's a big part of the draw to DeMamiel Creek Golf Course in Sooke. The low price. Plus the easy show-up-and-golf (using the on-site payment machine) or call ahead to SEAPARC Leisure Complex to set up your tee time. Whether you're new to golf or you want to practice your short game, this course provides a challenge for beginners and the more experienced golfer, says SEAPARC manager Steve Knoke. Hours of operation are 7am to 7pm Monday to Saturday, and Sundays 9-6. .../



The DeMamiel Creek Golf Course is operated by SEAPARC Leisure Complex. Last year it was particularly popular with seniors who can go-round twice on the 9-hole course for \$15.

DeMamiel Creek Par 3 Golf Course

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- Just \$15 per round
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Contact SEAPARC Leisure Complex at 250.642.8000 for information,
www.seaparc.ca



continued on page 5 ... /

continued on page 4 ... /

How information travels: a little birdie told me so



Mary P Brooke
Editor & Publisher
WEST SHORE
VOICE NEWS

● **Ha, only in Sooke!** While I was chatting with someone outdoors in Sooke last week, a hummingbird came right up to my left ear for a quick visit. What a buzz! Kind of like that expression about receiving a quietly unidentified message at close range... “a little birdie told me so”, only louder!

Which got me thinking about how information travels from one person’s ear to another. We all know that old party game where a message is told to the person next to you, who does the same in turn. And by the time the message reaches the last person it sounds almost nothing like the original.

The remedy for that phenomenon in democratic society is fact-based journalism and insightful analysis of current events, trends and societal actions. While organizations and politicians would love to get more people out to their meetings and while old folks would

probably still like to take in a rock concert, people can’t always be where they might want to be. It’s not just about people being too busy with their regular lives or for some reason can’t show up. It’s also that most people instinctively understand the primary role of media, that being to report the five W’s, i.e. what happened, where, how, when and why (and also how). In other words, media is trusted to be there for their fellow citizens, using their skills of observation, interviewing, listening and then composing with words and pictures about what has happened. The publisher’s or broadcaster’s role is to ensure delivery of the news, i.e. making sure that the target audience receives the assembled facts.

We give leeway to the power of professional journalism based on an established trust that the message is accurate and fair. We give leeway to the broad presence of publishers by accepting the presence of ads and promotional messaging, packed around the core news.

While most of us love a good story, a wild fantasy or a long drawn out tale, most people at least aim to ultimately settle down with the truth. Journalism and publishing provide that service of delivering truth, or at least the pieces required for getting to an understanding of what is really going on. Journalism also gives attentive readers a means to consider a future truth, one that has not yet manifested.

In this age of prolific information being available everywhere, the distinction is frequently lost in remembering the difference between ‘I can just post it myself on social media’ (or Google it) and actually writing news for the record as journalists are expected and driven to do. As you might choose to make better food choices for a healthier body, carefully selecting your news sources is a conscious choice for how you nourish your thoughts about the world you live in. ■

INFRASTRUCTURE

WEST SHORE VOICE NEWS

Bus pullout installations on Sooke Rd



Check for traffic updates at www.westshorevoicenews.com
Bus pullout under construction on Highway 14 (Sooke Road). Traffic interruptions coming up April 16 to 27 on that commuter route to and from Sooke.

● **The traffic marquee signs** have been on Highway 14 (Sooke Road) for about two weeks already, advising drivers about bus pullout installations coming up April 16 to 27. Given the lead time -- and with a message "thank you for your patience" -- it appears the traffic delays are something that commuters and on-

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Rock the Shores announces summer 2018 concert lineup

● **Rock the Shores** has announced their summer concert lineup for the July 13-15 weekend on the grounds of the Juan de Fuca Parks & Rec Centre in Colwood. Top headliners are Brian Wilson of the former Beach Boys, Social Distortion, and X Ambassadors. The annual summer outdoor concert is back in action this year, after a hiatus in 2017 when it was difficult to find acts in competition with Canada Day 150 events. Tickets are now available online and at West Shore Parks & Rec. A 3-day pass is \$169 for general admission (VIP \$338). Single-day passes \$59.95, \$69.95, \$79.95 (Fri, Sat, Sun). Reserved seating and parking available. Details at www.rocktheshores.com **WSV**

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Produced by the WestShore Chamber of Commerce

LETTER

BC would be a very different place

● **I really enjoyed your article** on Dave Barrett following the memorial service (March 9, 2018 *West Shore Voice News*, page 4). I have a friend in his 50's who has no idea where all the good things we have in BC have come from. I shall be giving him a copy of that week's paper! If it weren't for Dave Barrett and the NDP, BC would today be a very different place to live.
~ Bill Wilson, Sooke

road business travelers will want to accommodate in their scheduling. Three bus pullout locations have been developed since the Highway 14 improvements announcement on January 19 by Premier John Horgan, who is MLA for the Langford-Juan de Fuca area through which Hwy 14 runs. There are bus pullouts almost ready in the four-lane section just west of the West Shore Parkway (one on either side), and two just east of Sooke as you're heading westbound into Sooke. **WSV**

Road repairs coming in Langford

● **Along with the arrival of spring**, the crack-sealing component of the City of Langford engineering road maintenance program kicks in. Repairing cracks that result from general wear and tear plus winter conditions will start April 9 and continue around town through to May 14. The service area includes central Langford (between Sooke Rd and Hwy 1) and South Langford (south of Sooke Rd). That's a lot of road surface! Crews will be out and about 8 am to 4 pm in those areas. "Unlike previous years, the crack-sealing technique is quick-setting and does not require the laying down of sand," says Langford Director of Engineering Michelle Mahovich. Traffic control will be on-site directing traffic. Delays for motorists may be expected. **WSV**

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West Shore Voice News

The Sooke Voice News

Published by Brookline Publishing House Inc., Langford, BC, Canada

National Library Registration:
WV/ISSN 2368-9374 | SVN/ISSN 1925-2722

Mailing: 2969 Alouette Dr, Victoria, BC V9B 0M6 Tel & Text: 250-217-5821

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Copy deadline: 5 pm Mon
Ad bookings by: 5 pm Wed
Ad Tech: 300 dpi, RGB, jpg/PDF

Publisher: Brookline Publishing House Inc.
Editor, Writer, Layout, Ad Sales, Online Content: all writing by Mary P. Brooke, B.Sc., Cert PR unless otherwise stated.
Publishing Support: Jennifer Brooke. Reporter: Sophia Romanchuk. Community contributors this week: Jeff Bateman, Lisa Urlacher. Distribution: PDF/web, print, Twitter, Facebook. IT Network: Ivandafish Computing. Printing: Brookline Publishing House Inc. Courtesy copies: coffee shops; business reception areas, libraries, rec centres, community. Online PDF & breaking news (website & Facebook): ~ 64,000 page exposures/wk (social media & subscribers).

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Preparing for emergency alerts on your smartphone

West Shore
Voice News

● **Effective April 6, 2018**, emergency alerts in British Columbia issued through the national Alert Ready program can also be sent to compatible wireless devices, such as smartphones, to ensure more people have the information they need to act quickly in an emergency. That's in addition to the current availability of those alerts on TV and radio.

To find out if your wireless device is compatible with the Alert Ready system, visit: www.AlertReady.ca

Wireless alerts will be publicly tested for the first time in BC on Wednesday May 9, 2018 at 1:55 pm (Pacific time), alongside routine television and radio tests.

Emergency Management BC (EMBC) is the sole agency responsible for issuing emergency notifications on the Alert Ready system in the province, and will initially issue such alerts for tsunami threats only. The Province is considering expanding the use of Alert Ready beyond tsunamis to include other hazards and emergencies in the future.

"Accurate and timely information in an emergency situation can save lives and livelihoods, and we need to deploy every tool available to alert people of potential public safety threats," said Mike Farnworth, Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General. "As technology improves, we are always looking for new ways to broaden our reach and reduce the time it takes to communicate critical safety information. Wireless alerts will help us achieve both of those objectives."

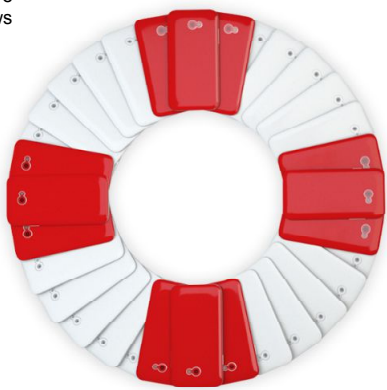
Wireless alerts will contain instructions for a safe response, and all British Columbians are urged to abide by these instructions without delay. In order to receive alerts, mobile phones must be connected to a cellular network, be alert-compatible and within the alert area. They will be broadcast automatically at no cost to the user.

"Wireless alerts are a welcome addition to our current alerting tools," said Jennifer Rice, Parliamentary Secretary for Emergency Preparedness. "These alerts will complement the Provincial Emergency Notification System (PENS), social media and, at the community level, sirens, subscription-based text message alerts and other mechanisms," says Rice.

"As the Province continues to refine its emergency management system, it is equally important that all British Columbians take their own steps to prepare by understanding the risks where they live and work, creating an emergency plan and assembling an emergency kit," Rice said.

The National Public Alerting System (NPAS), publicly branded as Alert Ready, is a collaborative initiative between federal-provincial-territorial governments and industry partners. It provides a standard alerting capability to rapidly warn the public of imminent or unfolding hazards to life.

Currently, in accordance with a 2014 Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) decision, all radio and television broadcasters in Canada are mandated to broadcast public alerts. On April 6, 2017, the CRTC mandated wireless service providers to be capable of sending wireless public alerts in Canada by April 6, 2018. **WSV**



Age-friendly in rural Metchosin

West Shore
Voice News

● **The District of Metchosin was recognized** as being 'age-friendly' in 2012 when it was established (as one of 45 communities in BC) with a Provincial Age-friendly Recognition Award. And they keep up the good work.

Metchosin offers their facilities, assets and staff to provide support for seniors within the community, including:

- **Metchosin, Arts and Culture Association (MACCA)** – The District provides space in the 1914 portion of the School to the Association www.metchosinartcentre.ca
- **Metchosin Community House** – The District provides the 'House' to the Association through a service agreement <https://sites.google.com/site/metchosincommunityassociation/>
- **Seniors Resource Information Centre (SIRC)** – The District has a service Agreement at \$15,000/year to provide deliverables to support seniors www.metchosin seniors.ca

In addition, the above organizations work with the Metchosin Fire Department and Emergency Operations Centre to:

- Ensure they are aware of frail and potentially vulnerable residents;
- Participate as a resource to the Care and Compassion and the Emergency Support Services units;
- Promote emergency preparedness programs for seniors
- Collaborate to provide programs (e.g. flu shots). **WSV**

NDP Caucus still behind leader Jagmeet Singh

by Mary P Brooke ~ West Shore Voice News

● **There were some awkward moments** for the national NDP caucus in recent weeks over some intense examination of their leader Jagmeet Singh by the national media. Singh had taken a while to step back from saying it was ok for him to participate in events with a faction of Sikhs who advocate achieving political independence by violent means, and more recently had dismissed then reinstated a long-time caucus member over how that MP had voted (apparently not in favour of an NDP position) in a parliamentary committee meeting.

To help Canadians know the NDP leader better through participation more in the inner sanctum of power, should Singh get a seat in Parliament? "Jagmeet's base is in Brampton, which is presently entirely federal Liberal members of parliament," says west shore MP Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan-Malahat-Langford). "There's not any feasible seat for him to run in." But caucus is "getting him out and about to as much as Canada as we can," explained MacGregor.

"Caucus has had some frank discussions (about their leader). I still have a lot of confidence in him. Chalk it up to a bit of inexperience. His heart's in the right place," he told *West Shore Voice News* this week. And perhaps most importantly, according to MacGregor: "Caucus is behind him." **WSV**

Free soil testing in the west shore

by Mary P Brooke, West Shore Voice News

Apply up to Wednesday April 11, 2018

● **The deadline has been extended** for participating in the soil-contaminants testing program available free through the Compost Education Centre (CEC). Applications may be submitted up to April 11 -- visit www.compost.bc.ca/healing-city-soils/

Now in its third year, CEC's Healing City Soils (partnered with Royal Roads University) is reaching out this year to homeowners in Colwood, Langford, and View Royal who grow their own food.

Last year the free soil testing for heavy metals was made available to residents in Oak Bay, and the year before that in Victoria and Esquimalt.

The program is also open to anyone planning to start food gardens or food forests on boulevards, in community plots or in their yard.

Sampling sites are volunteered by homeowners who are intending to grow food. Testing runs from mid-March to mid-May. Results are confidential.

Participants are chosen on a first-come first-served basis and at the discretion of the student teams from RRU and the project coordinator.

"All information is confidential and no addresses are shown on the Victoria Soil Quality interactive online map," says CEC executive director Marika Smith.

The program is creating a region-wide soil quality map by collecting and analyzing 100 soil samples for contaminants each year. In the first two years of the program (2016 and 2017), a total of 237 free soil tests were done.

Free soil tests for gardeners



These tests will look for **CONTAMINANTS**

2018: View Royal, Colwood, Langford

Submit your application up to April 11:

www.compost.bc.ca/healing-city-soils/

Potentially toxic soils can be a concern for urban food gardens as the contaminants may be taken up into or onto veggies and fruits.

A soil contaminant is an element (e.g. lead) or a chemical (e.g. diesel oil) present in the soil at a level that poses health risks to soil, plant, animal or human health. Contaminants can end up in soil or on plants through the air (dust, exhaust), water (rain, groundwater), and direct deposition (from on-site or nearby polluters).

Soil contaminants include heavy metals which are toxic to humans at certain concentrations. The list includes arsenic, copper, lead, mercury, nickel, chromium, cadmium, zinc and aluminum. Zinc and copper are necessary or beneficial to living organisms in small concentrations but are toxic above a certain concentration. Others like lead, cadmium, and mercury serve no known biological function and are always toxic.

Soil remediation tips and followup workshops are available at CEC located at 1216 North Park Ave in downtown Victoria.

Basic soil nutrient analysis is also available anytime at the Compost Education Centre by donation. www.compost.bc.ca **WSV**

More comment on Bill C-75 coming soon from NDP

Mary P Brooke
West Shore Voice News

● **Mandatory minimum sentences** that were introduced under the Harper Conservative government (thought to restrict the discretionary powers of judges) have not been changed in the proposed judicial system changes in Bill C-75 that were announced March 29 by federal Justice Minister Jody Wilson-Raybould. That particular change to the judicial system was promised by the Liberals during the 2015 election campaign.

Other than one quick media appearance by NDP MP Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan-Malahat-Langford) on CBC's *Power & Politics* last week, the NDP which is normally vocally active for progressive change has been pretty quiet on C-75 in the past week. However, a formal NDP position on C-75 is expected to come April 12, it was revealed April 6 by Murray Rankin's office. Rankin is the MP for Victoria and is now the NDP's Justice Critic, though last year it was MacGregor in that role.

So with Rankin presently away in Pakistan, MacGregor stepped in. "We don't really like it when you take away the discretion of the presiding judge," says MacGregor, saying the judge is the one who is firmly in command of the facts. He says that judges need more tools to deal with a sentence, because with a mandatory minimum sentence their hands are tied. "A defendant will defend themselves all the way through and that may clog up the court system by having really long trials," MacGregor said. Criticizing the Liberals for not taking action on this, he said "this is one area where we could really make some progress".

Telling *West Shore Voice News* this week, MacGregor said "we ultimately want to make our juries reflective of the society that we live in". And so he was glad that in C-75, preemptory powers (removal without explanation) will be taken from lawyers when choosing jury participants. Overall: "The NDP is not going to go after the government on any particular section of C-75, but we do want to take the time to study it thoroughly and come to a conclusion. There's a lot we're very happy with (in C-75), but why so long to get to this stage?"

And why not live up to the promise for mandatory minimums? "That's been our main criticism... removing discretionary power of the judge," MacGregor said. "If anyone should have discretion it should be the judge. The judge knows all the facts of the case, and the history of victim and accused before him or her. A judge should be the one who is equipped with the tools for a punishment that fits the crime. We're not advocating that punishments should be lessened, but that the judge has the tools already in the Criminal Code that can increase or decrease a case as the case merits," he said.

As of March 1, 2018 there were 56 judicial vacancies across Canada, including seven in BC. **WSV**



Alistair MacGregor, MP
(Cowichan-Malahat-Langford)
talking about C-75 on CBC last week.

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Langford grapples with multi-faceted housing crisis

West Shore Voice News

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.../ Westhills reported a 20% drop in visits to their show homes in recent weeks and a 15% drop in visits to their website. "The market doesn't like uncertainty," said Dale Sproule, Manager of Real Estate Sales & Marketing, Westhills Land Corp. "The best way to keep the housing crisis in line is to have more product, not more taxes," he told Council.

VREB president Kyle Kerr said that a 10% drop in housing values would result in a \$90 billion loss in equity across the province. However, he reiterated what housing analysts have long surmised, that housing values in south Vancouver Island will always see high demand due to desirable geographical factors.

A total of 688 MLS-listed properties sold through VREB in March, which is 25.9% fewer than in March last year. Within that, condo sales were down 28.2% compared to March 2017, and single family homes were down 30.8% from the previous year, according to the real estate board's April 3 release.

House prices went up again in March 2018. But despite the price pressures, the number of properties sold in March was up 26.2% from the month before.

Single family homes sold at an average sale price of \$903,052 in overall Greater Victoria (up over \$26,000 in one month from the February overall average sale price of \$876,397). The west shore breakdown for March 2018 also shows sizeable price points: \$754,867 in Colwood (12 sales), \$723,450 in Langford (53 sales), and \$554,704 in Sooke (27 sales).

In major core areas where single family homes are still the predominant housing type, March 2018 sale price averages clearly surpassed the million-dollar mark: \$1,025,006 in Saanich East and \$1,601,719 in Oak Bay. It's no wonder that families still holding the dream of a sizeable home with a yard in a serviced neighbourhood are flocking to the west shore for relatively affordable prices.

Three long-developed core areas saw single family home sale prices still holding under the million-dollar mark in March 2018: Victoria \$842,737, Saanich West \$798,367, and Esquimalt \$743,962.

Now back to the big-factor influences. The BC Real Estate Association (BCREA) in their April 4 *Market Intelligence* report said the BC Government's attempt "to drive down the price of homes through demand-side policy" would cause home construction activity to "fall dramatically" and that home builders would cut back production 25%. "That's 10,000 fewer housing starts in the first year alone," says BCREA, saying the overall impact of the new housing policy will have a "negative shock" on home prices that would impact both homeowners and renters.

The pressure is on buyers and their ability to qualify for mortgage financing. In his monthly online video report at www.bcrea.bc.ca, BCREA chief economist Cameron Muir said that "market conditions continue to favour home sellers in most BC regions".

Muir focussed on the significant cooling effect of the federal mortgage lending rules: "New mortgage rules requiring conventional borrowers to qualify at a higher interest rate both inflated December's numbers before the policy came into effect, and contributed to a pullback in consumer demand during the first two months of the year. Previous mortgage policy tightening has literally impacted housing demand for a period of four to seven months, with the largest impact occurring in the third month after this implementation." In other words, most of the intended chill on prospective buyers who might have tried getting into the home ownership market has now happened.

According to Muir's report, with the supply of homes for sale "continuing to trend at or near decade-lows, the tempering of demand induced by tougher mortgage qualifications will do little to stop home prices from rising in the near term". Those who have stayed in the housing market are benefitting.

Despite the developers in the west shore this week being worried about the impact of the BC speculation tax on their ultimate goal to sell more homes, the BCREA analysis this weeks says that "slowing consumer demand" (due to

the new mortgage rules) and "already elevated price levels -- combined with an expected surge in new home completions -- is expected to begin trending markets toward more balance between supply and demand this year". Reduction in the number of available buyers was already well underway. It could be argued that with the increasing level of home pricing that well-financed buyers from outside the region and the province have an even greater opportunity to participate to their benefit in the BC housing market. That's where (for the provincial government) that the BC speculation tax comes in, to try and keep housing within the reach of British Columbians. But with an economy that sees most individuals and families falling short of home purchasing success (in that income levels cannot qualify many people for mortgages at the bank), the desire of the provincial government to keep out non-resident buyers may end up just sagging region-specific housing markets and economies, such as is proposed to be the case in Langford.

In the BC Government's *30-point Plan for Housing Affordability in BC* a \$6.6 billion investment over 10 years to deliver 114,000 affordable homes is listed, intended to "fill gaps in the market including homes for growing families, home for seniors, housing options for women and children fleeing violence, and homes for students". The provision of rental units for "the missing middle" defined as "skilled workers" is being addressed with \$378 million over three years and more than \$1.8 billion over the next 10 years.

None of this directly addresses the supply side of the traditional mainstream real estate market that the developers and Realtors are sounding the alarm on. While the provincial government fully intends on dampening house prices (hand in hand with mortgage rules that are restricting many buyers), it appears they are already stepping on the toes that make housing happen. If that club isn't able to pull off what they do, the result is fewer homes for people to buy. And that will just drive up prices on available supply.

As the fastest-growing municipality in BC (perhaps only second to Surrey on the mainland), Langford sure does seem to feel that they need local developers and Realtors to be happy. Developers contribute significantly to community development initiatives. Langford council also sees many people finding housing to be less and less affordable, even though Langford has the second-lowest average house sale price in the region. Add to all that the additional factor of non-resident Canadians taking a liking to buying homes for future retirement in Langford, many of them in the Bear Mountain and Westhills areas. Talk about the big squeeze! Langford likely isn't wrong to hold the government's feet to the fire by articulating their own housing market challenges by way of protest-by-letter. If nothing else, it makes evident how broad the housing crisis is and just how deep the pain will continue to go. **WSV**

Own or rent: caught in between

HOUSING ANALYSIS

by Mary P Brooke ~ West Shore Voice News

● **With the continued price increases** in the Greater Victoria housing market combined with stricter mortgage-borrowing requirements, a chunk of would-be buyers are deliberately prevented from becoming homeowners. In the financial world it's referred to as 'cooling the housing market'.

That strategy ends up targeting those at the cusp of home ownership ... first-time buyers, and the home sellers with lower-end properties that appeal to the entry-level buyers. Individuals and families in that sector are generally the ones who can least afford the costs associated with the risks and overhead costs of dealing with real estate transactions. Costs include legal fees, Realtor commissions, property purchase tax, and extended dual costs while waiting for homes to sell -- like higher rates for vacant home insurance and requiring the cash flow for temporary renting or couch-surfing in the meantime (which contributes to productivity loss and lifestyle stress).

The big chill served to hurt that vulnerable sector of would-be buyers and entry-level homesellers who literally live on the edge of the market -- in or out of homeownership, which will it be?

Last fall and in early 2018, as the list price of lower-end homes frequently dropped in order to find buyers who could qualify, those who tried to make the most of having owned a home may have suffered the most.

With qualification for mortgage financing becoming tougher, these previous homeowners often now end up as renters - and usually at the top end of the renter food chain where houses rent for as much as \$2,500 per month in Greater Victoria or more. That may be the only portion of the rental market with a relatively higher vacancy rate, due to the price point.

Seeking input from resources like www.readytorentbc.org where their goal is to help with housing stability and successful tenancies, or dealing directly with a property management firm, are two ways to manoeuvre in the complex waters of housing decisions for those who will not ever, or cannot now, afford to buy. **WSV**



Cameron Muir,
chief economist,
BC Real Estate
Association



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West Shore RCMP Wall of Honour

continued from page 1 ... /

.../ Cst Beckett was on duty when her police cruiser was impacted by a pickup truck in an early morning crash at the prominent intersection of Goldstream Ave and Peatt Rd, in central Langford. That was two years ago on April 5, 2016.

West Shore RCMP Cst Matt Baker gave a heartfelt presentation about the tragic incident that took Cst Beckett from her family, co-workers and community.

"She was a fantastic cop, she was a great cop, but she was an even better mom, and that's probably the thing I'd ask people to remember the most, just how much heart she had and how caring she was," he said as a colleague and friend.

"It's probably the biggest tragedy from a community perspective," said Langford Mayor Stew Young, saying it created a shock when it happened and has left people with an "anxiety about it, it doesn't leave you".

A public memorial evening candlelight walk for Cst Sarah Beckett was held five days after the tragic incident in 2016, along Goldstream Ave in Langford -- from the corner of Peatt Rd where the crash happened, over to Veterans Memorial Park. Then on April 12 a regimental funeral for Beckett was held at the Q Centre arena in Colwood attended by a full house including dignitaries, RCMP, and



RCMP

Cst Sarah Beckett was an RCMP officer for 11 years. Her husband and two sons attended the Wall of Honour unveiling at the West Shore RCMP Detachment in Langford on April 5, 2018.

the public. Ahead of that, thousands of RCMP, police and military had marched along Island Hwy.

Sarah Beckett, 32, had been an RCMP officer for 11 years. The driver of the vehicle that crashed into her cruiser was Kenneth Jacob (Jake) Fenton. He was determined to have been driving as much as 90 km/h in a 50 km/h zone; he suffered minimal to no injury. Fenton was sentenced to four years in prison for impaired driving causing death and dangerous driving causing death.

Beckett is the first female RCMP officer to die on duty in BC.

The unveiling was also attended by West Shore RCMP Inspector Larry Chomyn, Staff Sgt Raj Sandhu, Sgt Major Kathy Rochlitz, and Colwood Mayor Carol Hamilton. **WSV**

RCMP & MOTI presentations at OPSRRA AGM

● **The Otter Point, Shirley and Jordan River Resident and Ratepayers Association (OPSRRA)** represents about 400 residents in those three small, unincorporated communities west of Sooke. www.opsrra.ca

Their AGM will be held on Sunday, April 15 at 2 pm at the Juan de Fuca Services Building, 3-7450 Butler Rd. Guest speakers: Arnie Campbell about the new Interactive History of Otter Point; RCMP Staff Sgt Jeff McArthur on community policing; Ryan Evanoff, Operations Manager, MOTI with a Highway 14 review; and Mike Hicks, JdFEA Regional Director with various JdF updates. **WSV**



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SD62 bus registration demo & 2018-2019 budget

West Shore Voice News

● **Sooke School District SD62 trustees** and senior staff will present a 2018-2019 bus registration demo at their April 10 Education Committee of the Whole meeting on Tuesday, April 10.

The 7 pm meeting will be held at Journey Middle School and is open to the public.

Also on the agenda is a presentation by Assistant Superintendent Stephanie Hedley-Smith about the French Teaching Assistant Program

Other items up for discussion by the board, senior staff and those present include the 2018/19 budget and capital plan, the national day care strategy, and the revised 2018-2019 school calendar. **WSV**

Diversity of housing encompasses seniors in Colwood

West Shore Voice News

● **Colwood is encouraging diversity** in housing that provides choice in levels of affordability. "Density is being created where it makes sense along with retail/commercial to maintain walkable community connected to Transit and Trails," says Colwood Mayor Carol Hamilton.

"Partnerships with Pacifica Housing and Greater Victoria Housing will bring much needed 'subsidized' housing to our community," says Hamilton. "As well as the expansion of Trillium's Westshore Lodge and the commitment of Island Health to expand Senior Care in the westshore in the next two years, that will allow for opportunity for folks to remain in the community," she told West Shore Voice News.

"We are fortunate to have a thriving Seniors Centre and recreation options within Colwood," says Hamilton. **WSV**

Belmont Residences: a planned community

Near the Galloping Goose Trail, with some buildings bordering directly onto the forest.

West Shore Voice News



Belmont Residences

● **The Belmont Residences Master Plan** in Langford will comprise rental and privately-owned condominiums across seven buildings, with an adjacent commercial marketplace (developed separately by Crombie REIT) to create a 24-acre full-amenity community. Construction is underway along Division Avenue and Jacklin Road.

Raymond Letkeman Architects (RLA) has been tasked to design a residential space to reflect the fluidity of the natural west coast location, while creating a real sense of permanence, community, and livability. The team drew inspiration from local surroundings and environment through an unconventional, yet highly effective, collaborative envisioning process among the architect, developer, marketing and sales team, landscape architect, and interior designer.

"Belmont is a modern interpretation of west coast style. The climate and environment dictate both a need for shelter from inclement weather and plenty of open space for sunny days," says Greg Voute, lead architect. Ease and convenience for residents to engage with the outdoors includes underground kayak storage, bike-washing/repair station, and pet grooming station. Overhangs and durable materials, as well as generous balconies with maximized views create seamless indoor/outdoor living. A fan-shaped tree feature will grace the building entrance, while wood hues on railings and soffits and shingled siding will enhance the west coast character. The use of dark basalt stone and wood columns are additional innovative expressions of the surroundings.

The Belmont Properties Sales Centre is set to open in early May. Priority preview appointments available to registrants: www.BelmontResidences.com **WSV**

Another golf season coming up in Sooke

continued from page 1 ... /

West Shore Voice News

.../ ● **Saturdays are a high-use day** for the course, says Knoke. He says that the Family Nights on Friday evenings last year didn't take off as expected; that opportunity for people to get out together for family recreation will be offered on a different evening of the week in 2018.

Club rental is available for \$7.25 and pull-cart rental for \$4.75. Extra rounds are \$10.

Last year's \$135 pass card for 10 visits will be offered this year at \$395 as a Season's Pass -- for unlimited use of the course during the full season (April 18 up to Thanksgiving in October).

One of the maintenance challenges for SEAPARC is watching the water supply to the golf course. Well water is the source, with no CRD-supplied water backup. Water is stored on the property in three ponds, says Knoke. That's used for irrigating the course. "We manage the water very carefully



Mary P Brooke ~ WestShore Voice News

DeMamiel Creek Golf Course will be open daily in Sooke from April 18 to Thanksgiving weekend.

because it's all we have," Knoke said this week, himself a golf enthusiast.

Golf balls and tees are available for sale at DeMamiel Creek Golf Course.

Green fees and all other purchases can be done using the payment machine that accepts credit cards and cash; about half the transactions are done that way -- payment can also be made at SEAPARC Leisure Complex at 2618 Phillips Road, or online at www.seaparc.ca . **WSV**

Vancouver to Seattle by air

West Shore Voice News

● **Downtown-to-downtown seaplane service** is set to launch between Vancouver and Seattle. Starting April 26 there will be four daily flights between Coal Harbour in Vancouver and Lake Union and Lake Washington near Seattle.

The Monday to Friday service is being provided by Vancouver's Harbour Air and US partner Kenmore Air.

"The Province of British Columbia welcomes the new daily seaplane service between Vancouver and Seattle," said Premier John Horgan on April 5. "Today's announcement is a significant milestone that will strengthen the connection between BC and Washington state. Washington state Governor Jay Inslee and I have been working hard to grow our economies, find new opportunities to expand our flourishing tech and innovation corridor, and create good jobs on both sides of the border," Horgan said in a news release.

"Our government will continue to support and pursue strong, sustainable economic development that works for the people of British Columbia and Washington state," said Horgan. **WSV**

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WHAT'S GOING ON

Event postings: PRIORITY TO ADVERTISERS

Coffee Chat with Randall Garrison, MP (Esquimalt-Saanich-Sooke). Sat Apr 7. Sooke community invited to drop in, no RSVP required. 12 noon to 1pm, at Stick in the Mud, 6715 Eustace Rd.

Up the Blooming Hill. Sun Apr 8. 1-2:30pm. Guided hike at Lone Tree Hill Regional Park, Highlands. Age 8+. With CRD naturalist. www.crd.bc.ca/parks-events

Blood Donor Clinic. Mon Apr 9. Sooke Legion, 6726 Eustace Rd, 12:30-7:30 pm. www.blood.ca

SD62 Education Committee of Whole. Tues Apr 10. Journey Middle School, Sooke. 7pm. www.sd62.bc.ca

Bear Mountain Parkway. Tues Apr 10. Opens to regular traffic after 7pm. www.langford.ca

Healing City Soils. Free contaminants testing (for homeowners in View Royal, Colwood, Langford), apply up to April 11. www.compost.bc.ca

8th Annual Farm & Film GALA. Wed Apr 11 at EMCS. Mingle & shop 6:30 pm, film 7 pm. sookefoodchi.ca and www.awarenessfilmmight.ca

Wildflowers of Mill Hill. Sat Apr 14. 10am-12pm. Guided hike at Mill Hill, Langford. Age 18+. Explore spring wildflowers with CRD naturalist. No fee. Pre-register by April 11. www.crd.bc.ca/parks-events

Highlands Music Coffee House. Sat Apr 14. Caleb Pike Heritage Park, 1980 Millstream Rd. 7-9 pm.

Communities Street Clean-Up (Sooke). Sat Apr 14. www.transitionsooke.org

OPSRRA AGM Sun Apr 15. At the Juan de Servics Bldg, 3-7450 Butler Rd, 2pm. www.opsrra.ca

Highway 14 (Sooke Rd) - some traffic delays for bus pullout installation. Apr 16 to 27. www.drivebc.ca

Electricity in Your Home. Emergency prep info session, Tues Apr 17. Metchosin fire hall. 7pm. www.metchosinfire.ca

SPEAC (SD62 District PAC) Meeting. Wed Apr 18. Millstream Elementary. 7 pm. www.sd62.bc.ca



West Shore Parks & Rec board meeting, Thurs April 19. JdF Library. 7pm.

Children's Art Show. Fri Apr 20. 3:30 to 5 pm. Coast Collective Art Centre. www.coastcollective.ca

Victoria Home & Garden Show. Apr 20-22. JdF Rec, 1767 Island Hwy, Colwood.

West Shore Arts Council silent auction fundraiser. Sat Apr 21. 7 pm. Royal Colwood Golf & Country Club. www.westshorearts.org

Earth Day. Sun Apr 22. 2018 theme: End Plastic Pollution. www.earthday.org | Earth Day Party at Sooke Community Hall including Repair Cafe, vendors, family activities, upcycled fashion show, evening dance, zero-waste food trucks. www.transitionsooke.org

Blood Donor Clinic. Mon April 23. Royal Bay Secondary, 3500 Ryder Hesjedal Way. 9-4. www.blood.ca

SD62 Public Board Meeting. Tues Apr 24. Admin office, 3143 Jacklin Rd. 7 pm. www.sd62.bc.ca

Viva La WestShore 2018. Fri Apr 27. 7 to 11 pm. Olympic View Golf Club. www.westshore.bc.ca

SD62 School Bus Registration for 2018-2019. Starts end of April. Date tba. www.sd62.bc.ca

'HITS' concert by Sooke Community Choir. Fri May 4 & Sat May 5 at 7:30 pm & Sun May 6 at 2 pm at Sooke Community Hall. Also May 12 at 2pm at Qualicum Beach Civic Centre, 747 Jones St, Qualicum Beach. Tx \$20 (free under age 16). www.sookecommunitychoir.com

Duck Day at the Flats. Sat May 5. 12th annual duck race. Sooke River Campground. 11am-3pm (race 12pm). Tx \$5 or 5/\$20. www.e-clubhouse.org/sites/sookeharboursidelions

HSBC Women's Sevens Rugby Tournament. May 12-13. Westhills Stadium, Langford. www.worldrugby.org

Sooke Rotary annual fundraiser. Dinner at Prestige Hotel with silent auction. Sat May 12. Tx \$60 at Little Vienna Bakery or email roger temple48@gmail.com

75th Annual Swiftsure International Yacht Race. May 24 to 28. www.swiftsure.org

Kingfisher Preschool Family Fun Day. Sat May 26. Sooke Family Resource Society, 6672 Wadams Way. Send stories your SFRS experiences to info@sfrs.ca

Salt Spring Potters Guild juried Exhibition and Prize Competition. Submissions accepted to May 31. Exhibit Oct 4-14. www.ssicaceramicawards.com

Sooke Fine Arts Show submissions open to June 4. Show dates July 27-Aug 6. www.sookefinearts.com

BC Minimum Wage up to \$12.65 on June 1, 2018.

Rock the Shores. Outdoor weekend rock concert in Colwood. July 13-15. www.rocktheshores.com

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Junior hockey team in crash: 15 fatalities

West Shore Voice News
[sources: Globe & Mail, CBC, CTV, Canoe, GoFundMe]

● **Mid-afternoon on Friday April 6** a bus carrying the Humboldt Broncos junior hockey team was hit by a semi-trailer truck in northern Saskatchewan (about 300 km north of Regina). Of 29 people on the bus, 15 died: 10 players (ages 16 to 21), the bus driver, two coaches, a volunteer statistician and a broadcaster. The other 14 were injured.

As of 9:15 pm on April 7 a GoFundMe page at <https://ca.gofundme.com/funds-for-humboldt-broncos> had raised \$2,743,903 of their \$4 million goal (raised by 40,705 people in one day) to help support families of the victims. Additionally, WestJet has offered Bronco hockey family members assistance getting to Saskatoon by plane.

The Humboldt Broncos junior hockey team was on their way to a playoff game against the Nipawin Hawks in northeastern Saskatchewan.

Former NHL player Sheldon Kennedy recalled to TV media about a team -- oddly enough also with a Broncos name (Swift Current Broncos) -- that in 1986 had a bus accident in which four of his teammates were killed. His team's bus had hit a patch of ice and crashed while the hockey team was en route to Regina. Kennedy said the collective trauma is far-reaching and residual. **WSV**

Environmental poetry contest

● **An adjudicated poetry competition** is being held as part of the Sooke Region Earth Day Celebration. Deadline for entries is Sunday, April 15. Winners to be announced and prizes distributed at the Planet Earth Party on the evening of Sun April 22 at the Sooke Community Hall.

Celebrated Sooke region poet Wendy Morton will adjudicate. Participants are invited to email their best 10 lines (maximum) by Sunday, April 15 to wendymorton@shaw.ca. Entries must be inspired by an earth and environment-related subject or the international Earth Day 2018 theme of plastic reduction.

Two age categories: child/youth (under 16) and adult. No entry fee. Prizes will be awarded in all categories. **WSV**

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Bear Mountain Parkway extension opens April 10

● **The Bear Mountain Parkway extension** in Langford will be open to the public after 7 pm on Tuesday, April 10. A reception at the Westin Bear Mountain Hotel Ballroom to celebrate 25 years of constructing Langford will follow the road opening.

The new extension is about 3.5 km long, connecting existing areas of Bear Mountain and the Bear Mountain Village to the developing areas of South Skirt Mountain and the Leigh Road Interchange/Trans Canada Hwy, connecting across the Leigh Road overpass into areas of central Langford.

The \$10.5 million project includes underground infrastructure and roadworks. Pedestrians will be able to access the new road on sidewalks in developed areas and a packed gravel trail in undeveloped residential areas. **WSV**

TRAFFIC INFO LANGFORD ON THE MOVE

Mon Apr 9 weekdays to Fri May 04

7:30 am to 5 pm. Traffic delays for utilities & frontage works, 2854 Peatt Rd at Hockley Ave.

Tues Apr 10 - Bear Mountain Parkway extension opens to through-traffic after 7 pm.

Current, to Apr 30. Construction of improvements to the Millstream Overpass at Veterans Memorial Parkway. Some traffic closures/delays (except Fridays ahead of long weekends, and Mondays of long weekends).

Current, to mid-June/July. Jacklin Rd closed (Jenkins to Terlane) to facilitate nearby construction efficiencies. Detour through the Belmont Market construction site on the new Division Ave.

Current, to summer 2018. Leigh Road at Langford Parkway Railway Crossing. Completion of Leigh Road Railway Crossing to Langford Parkway.

Current, until mid-summer. Traffic interruptions for sewer installation along Bray Ave, Carlow Rd, Linda Lane (west of Jacklin Rd & Goldstream Ave).

For other short-term traffic advisories visit

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