

Qualicum Beach is a charming coastal village surrounded by rivers, forests and farmland in the shadow of Mount Arrowsmith. Our small-town character, walkability, and year-round access to recreational opportunities support a high quality of life for residents and an attractive destination for visitors. The Town will innovate in response to the social, economic and environmental challenges of the future while holding firm to those qualities that make Qualicum Beach a unique and highly desirable place to live.

~ OCP Vision Statement

February 5, 2021

Town of Qualicum Beach
201 – 660 Primrose St
Qualicum Beach, BC V9K 1J5

Dear Mayor Wiese, Councillors Harrison and Westbrook,

We are writing this shared open letter to you to alert and inform you of the serious concerns shared by a significant number of the electorate of Qualicum Beach. This letter serves as our request for Council to open up communication with those you are elected to serve.

In a letter to citizens dated January 3, 2019 Mayor Wiese stated:

“In the future I invite you to approach Council directly with your concerns. Over the next four years of this term, Council will maintain the Town’s high standard of public engagement, and I trust that you will stay engaged as we work with residents and stakeholders in pursuit of the Town’s long-term vision.”

So here we are. Engaged, ready to participate, share our views and work with Council. However, recent observations and experience would tell us this current Council is not listening and not working with or for its citizens.

Over the past year, there has been a significant reduction or loss of opportunities for citizens to have their voices heard.

- There have been no Committee of the Whole meetings where dialogue and discussion are allowed since February 2020.
- There have been no Mayor’s Open Houses since February 2020.
- Council recently amended its Procedure Bylaw to reduce the allotted time for a delegation to Council from 10 minutes to 5 minutes.
- Requests to appear before Council as a delegation have been refused.
- Not upholding a land use public consultation process when citizens were led to believe there would be an opportunity to be heard.
- Council motions to meet and/or consult with citizens are not being fulfilled.
- An unreasonable time limit imposed on public comment during public hearings.
- Individual members of Council are not acknowledging requests from citizen groups and/or individuals to meet with them.
- Citizen Select Committees have essentially been put on hold (with no ability for public observation when meetings are held) while Council meetings carry on with “business as usual”.

Council is operating in a ZOOM cocoon.

Also concerning are the multitude of letters from citizens with questions, concerns and requests that go unanswered by Council and the Town of Qualicum Beach. Yes, an official acknowledgement of receipt is usually issued but this in no way answers or addresses the content and issues at hand.

We sincerely ask *"Is anyone at the Town of Qualicum Beach listening?"* We have noted more often than not, the majority of input on a decision requiring public consultation is in opposition, yet this Council votes to proceed regardless. How can this be? On what information are you basing your decisions? It also appears some members of Council are not listening with an open mind to understand but are listening only to respond.

This Council has ignored or dismissed hundreds of emails, requests with broad community support, social media posts and thousands of names on petitions. Why?

- You did not like the format in which they were sent; this technology only makes it easier for people to reach out to you and share their comments and concerns, especially during a pandemic;
- You believe every signatory must be a registered voter in the town so you dismiss the petition in its entirety; and
- You consider it "banter", "unfounded" and "not factual".

Caught up in the excuses, you have missed the message: there is discontent with the lack of transparency and meaningful public consultation.

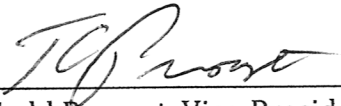
Each one of you spoke of transparency in your bid to be elected. In addition to all of the lost opportunities to consult with the public, this Town Council met in-camera 28 times in 2020.

The justification given for your large pay increases at the beginning of this term was that you were doing the work of a seven person Council (the Council we are technically entitled to). Yet, currently we are represented by only three, which does not sufficiently represent your electorate. We request you do everything within your ability, as will we, to prepare for the election of a seven person council in the next general local government election scheduled for October next year, 2022.

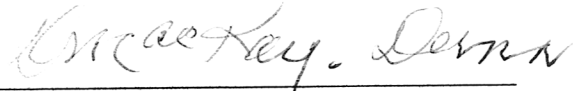
We, the citizens of Qualicum Beach, want and deserve better. Qualicum Beach is a tourist town and many visitors return to its beauty every year. We all share our love of Qualicum Beach and what makes it special. So we implore you to follow our collective long-term vision as reflected in the Official Community Plan that "was adopted on June 18, 2018 after nearly two years of public consultation and extensive public engagement" (Mayor Wiese's letter of January 3, 2019) while maintaining the town's high-standard of public engagement.

We are collectively asking for a meaningful response to this letter and our concerns as well as a meeting with Council and a representative from each of our organizations.

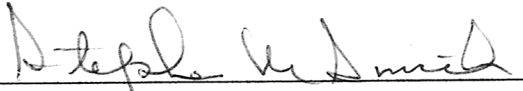
Sincerely,



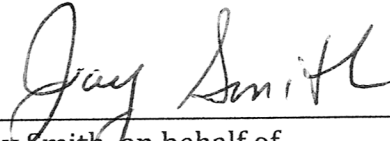
Todd Provost, Vice-President
Qualicum Woods Residents' Association




Doug MacKay-Dunn, President
Qualicum Beach Residents' Association



Stephen Smith on behalf of
West Ridge Neighbours



Jay Smith, on behalf of
Friends of the Qualicum Beach Forest



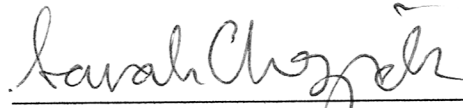
Michael Jessen
Arrowsmith Parks and Land Use Council



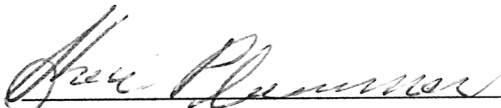
Sally Soanes, President
Arrowsmith Naturalists



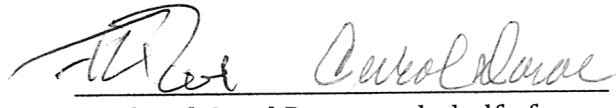
Teresa Hitch, on behalf of
Oceanside For Safe Technology (O4ST)



Sarah Chezick, on behalf of
Arrowsmith GroundWater Alliance



Sheri Plummer, on behalf of
Communities Protecting Our Coasts



Fred and Carol Dowe, on behalf of
Concerned Citizens Opposed to the Telus
Cell Tower in QB

Attachment: Letter from Brent Mueller, Director, Governance and Structure, Ministry of Municipal Affairs (Ref:260619)

Copied to: The Honourable John Horgan, M.L.A. Premier of British Columbia
The Honourable Josie Osborne, M.L.A. Minister of Municipal Affairs
Adam Walker, M.L.A., Parksville-Qualicum
Chair Tyler Brown, Regional District of Nanaimo Board of Directors
BC Ombudsperson
Inspector of Municipalities, British Columbia
Daniel Sailland, Chief Administrative Officer, Town of Qualicum Beach
Councillor Robert Filmer, Town of Qualicum Beach
Editor, Parksville-Qualicum Beach News
Editor, SecondOpinionQB
Editor, Oceanside News
Editor, Times-Colonist
Kieran Oudshoorn, CBC