

Tasha Buchanan

Subject: A Call for Municipal Solidarity and Transparency on PFAS Contamination at YYJ and all BC Airports

From: Phil Perras <[REDACTED]>

Sent: Friday, October 17, 2025 12:30 AM

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Subject: A Call for Municipal Solidarity and Transparency on PFAS Contamination at YYJ and all BC Airports

Dear Mayor and Council,

I am writing to inform you of a concerning pattern that has emerged around **Victoria International Airport (YYJ)** — one that reflects not only an authoritarian tone from federal authorities, but also likely a deeper effort to suppress transparency and silence public concern.

Recently, the **District of North Saanich** designated airport lands as **multi-purpose** — including residential, commercial, and industrial uses — as part of its new **Official Community Plan (OCP)**. This democratic, good-faith decision was met with immediate federal hostility. **Transport Canada** responded with a letter demanding that the municipality reverse course and defer entirely to federal control.

Please note how the tone of that response was *not* cooperative. It was **authoritarian**.

Instead of acknowledging legitimate local priorities — housing, affordability, and environmental safety — the federal government defaulted to territorial defensiveness. Its message was simple: *do not question us*.

Yet the truth is that the lands around the airport have long been suspected of **PFAS contamination** from decades of **firefighting-foam use**. These so-called “forever chemicals” have been confirmed at many Canadian airports and are known to **bio-accumulate in groundwater, soil, plants and the human body**. According to the Canadian Environmental Law Association, the Victoria International Airport’s fire-training area is listed as a **suspected PFAS contamination site**, and petition records reference **PFAS-impacted soil stockpiles** at YYJ — facts the public appears to have never been given in full detail.

Thus, the likely motive behind Ottawa’s reaction is *self-preservation*.

Any honest environmental audit could expose a costly legacy of contamination — one that would demand accountability for decades of harm to our people, our drinking water, and our healthcare system.

If the federal government acted in good faith, it would **welcome local participation, share test data, and plan transparent remediation**. Instead, it has chosen secrecy and coercion.

That choice reflects not leadership, but *fear*.

The Role of the Mayor and the People’s Voice

In this context, the **North Saanich Mayor’s** offhand remark at a council meeting — one that drew national attention — must be understood not as a threat, but as an **expression of anguish**. I believe his tone mirrors that of the people he represents: people like **Szorra**, an elderly woman I met in a municipality neighbouring the airport.

Szorra lives in pain, unhoused after being priced out of supportive housing by a fee increase she could not afford. In despair, she told me she sometimes wants to “burn the system down” — not because she wishes harm, but because she can no longer bear what the system has done to her. She knows those thoughts are wrong, yet admits that they can offer a momentary solace in the biting cold.

This is what leadership must confront *honestly*.

The mayor is not detached from his people’s pain — **he feels it with them**. His blunt words are the echo of collective suffering that polite diplomacy has ignored for far too long. That empathy is not weakness; it is proof that democracy still breathes in North Saanich.

When federal authorities scold a mayor for voicing that pain, they are not defending civility — they are **attacking representation itself**.

A Call for Transparency and Municipal Solidarity

Every municipality in British Columbia should demand from **Transport Canada**:

1. **Immediate disclosure** of all environmental assessments, PFAS testing data, and historical firefighting-foam use records from BC airports.
2. **Independent, third-party testing** of groundwater and soil near BC airports — funded by the federal government but **overseen by municipal and provincial representatives**.
3. **A joint remediation plan** developed with municipalities and health care providers to ensure that our communities are not left with the cleanup burden.
4. **Public release of monitoring results** through an open data portal accessible to all residents.
5. **A formal commitment** that local voices will not be silenced, discredited, or punished for raising legitimate concerns.

This is not only about North Saanich — it is about **every community living in the shadow of federal land management**, and every resident whose health and housing are treated as collateral.

Conclusion: Pain Is the Proof of Conscience

When a mayor speaks harshly, it is because they refuse to go numb to the suffering around them.
When senior governments react harshly, it is because they cannot stand being reminded of their neglect.

Municipal leaders must never forget their duty: **to amplify the voices of their people**, especially when those voices tremble with anger or pain.

That is what North Saanich Mayor Peter Jones did — and it is what every other principled leader in this province *must* continue to do.

Respectfully,

Philip Perras

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