

Dear Mayor and Council,

On Monday, November 17th, I attended the District of North Saanich council meeting to speak to my most recent letter — this time not as an activist or critic, but as a science communicator sharing newly published findings summarized by renowned educator Anton Petrov, who had reported on breakthrough microplastics research only two days earlier. These findings make the need for stronger regulations on plastic production unmistakably clear.

In the peer-reviewed studies Anton cites, definitive evidence is now established:

- Microplastics have been discovered inside human brain tissue, confirming they can breach the blood–brain barrier — something long believed impossible.
- Nanoplastic particles disrupt mitochondrial function, damaging the electron transport chain essential for cognition and cell health.

Separate from Anton’s reporting but equally urgent, PFAS exposure has been shown in animal models to cause tumors, driven by carbon–fluorine bonds that the human body cannot break down. These revelations are now well-documented in the scientific literature.

This is why I am calling for province-wide moratoriums on artificial turf and transparent monitoring of plastic and PFAS contamination for residents. Airborne microplastics can enter the brain through the olfactory nerve, and artificial-turf blades — thin, brittle, wind-dispersible plastic shards — are highly plausible contributors. Until causation studies catch up to these already-confirmed pathways, the precautionary principle must guide municipal decision-making.

Provincial Disclosure Reforms and Municipal Budget Pressure

While at the meeting, I remained to listen to the RCMP presentation — a pre-written script, likely drafted by senior leadership — requesting that Council approve funding for a “Major Crimes Disclosure Clerk” before next year’s budget has even been reviewed. As any observer of governance knows, early budget pre-approvals raise questions of fairness and favoritism.

During the discussion, a revealing admission surfaced: the Province’s 2020 disclosure reforms — introduced during the Covid-19 pandemic — have severely bogged down frontline officers with new administrative burdens; the opposite of what they were intended to do. Instead of revisiting these policies, Crown has become increasingly demanding of municipalities, according to one councilor, pressuring local governments to fund specialized RCMP positions to manage the backlog created by Crown and provincial leadership themselves.

To be clear, the 2020 reform in question was a province-wide Disclosure Memorandum of Understanding signed jointly by BC Prosecution Service, RCMP, municipal police leaders, and the Public Prosecution Service of Canada. Although the MOU claimed it would “streamline” disclosure, it instead

imposed extensive digital-administrative obligations: rigid naming conventions, expanded evidence-packing rules, and mandatory electronic disclosure.

The MOU made no mention of new disclosure clerks or other staff, no acknowledgment of the workload it imposed, and no suggestion that municipalities would be expected to finance it. Yet in 2026, these same institutions now cite the MOU as justification for downloading costs onto municipalities. This is policy laundering — an administrative bottleneck created by senior agencies, followed by pressure on local governments to pay for the fix.

If the Province and Crown worked together to make this problem, then British Columbians shouldn't need to write their MLA's for them to work together on a solution that doesn't involve downloading costs onto local governments. In previous correspondence, I raised concerns that the RCMP, Crown Counsel, and the BC Ministry of Justice have used the very disorder they helped create to expand civil-forfeiture pathways, effectively turning procedural dysfunction into a provincial revenue stream. What we heard at the District of North Saanich meeting confirmed this pattern in real time.

Systemic Accountability Failures and the E-Comm 911 Review

These issues are not isolated. The independent EY review of E-Comm 911 completed in September (released publicly on November 7) — confirms what municipalities have been saying for years: the system lacked clear governance, financial controls, and meaningful oversight. EY found that accountability effectively stopped nowhere, with unclear authority, unpredictable levy increases and no contingency fund for emergencies — the very business they are in.

Two reports were released.

The first identified major operational and budgeting failures and issued 25 recommendations, including stronger financial controls, a stakeholder-management framework, and a review of E-Comm's 23-member board, which currently includes no Vancouver Island representation — despite Island municipalities being required to absorb downloaded levies.

The second report outlined four possible service-delivery models and emphasized that the province's role in emergency communications must finally be defined.

Importantly, while the Province had promised an independent review back in December 2024, it was the unity of the ten South Island mayors — standing together on the Legislature steps in January 2025 to protest the downloading of 911 costs — that forced the issue into the political foreground and ensured the review could not be quietly sidelined. Their public stance made it impossible for the Province to downplay, delay, or dilute the process, especially after years of unresolved concerns despite municipalities having been notified of the impending cost shift as early as 2019.

For years, E-Comm operated on trust rather than transparency. The EY findings now confirm what local governments had been warning all along: accountability was missing, oversight was weak, and only

municipal unity made the truth impossible to ignore.

Toxic Leadership, Silencing, and the Erosion of Oversight

Across every level of governance — municipal, provincial, and federal — we are witnessing the consequences of toxic leadership that fears accountability more than failure itself. In recent months, reports from within our own province have exposed a disturbing pattern: workplace dysfunction, retaliation against whistleblowers, and silence in the face of ethical collapse. From Victoria's bylaw division to the mass resignation of Kamloops ob-gyns, and even at the national level with the RCMP oversight body in paralysis, we see the same story — a crisis of leadership, *not of resources*.

Right now, the rule of law itself is faltering. The Civilian Review and Complaints Commission — once the oversight mechanism for the RCMP — has now collapsed under its own toxic leadership and sits leaderless, paralyzed, and unable to issue rulings. The body charged with holding power accountable has become a mirror of the very dysfunction it was built to prevent. The same symptoms — fear, favoritism, and stagnation — are now spreading through the arteries of our democracy. What we are seeing at the CRCC is not an isolated failure; it is a warning of what is happening to our country.

When asked about the investigations within Victoria's bylaw department, Mayor Marianne Alto called it "disappointing." Yet disappointment is only the beginning: this is an opportunity for municipalities to speak openly about stigma, retaliation, and the need to create environments where employees can safely report wrongdoing. By naming stigma as the barrier it is, municipalities can transform crisis into opportunity — showing that courage and compassion are the true instruments of accountability.

At the Canadian Forces College, Major Jason Thompson found that toxic leadership flourishes where fear, favoritism, and performance metrics outweigh ethics — breeding cynicism and silence across entire systems. Likewise, at UBC Sauder, Dr. Lingtao Yu has shown that abusive or narcissistic leadership inflicts measurable psychological harm and spreads through imitation, while evidence-based, responsible leadership practices can restore organizational health.

The lesson for municipalities is clear: the antidote to toxicity is unity through transparency. Just as the military now uses climate surveys and 360-degree feedback to expose unhealthy command cultures, municipalities could establish cross-council leadership-health audits and inter-municipal accountability networks — peer-review mechanisms where local governments periodically assess each other's governance climate. Such a model, led collectively by mayors and councils rather than imposed from above, would make British Columbia the first province to institutionalize democratic self-correction at the community level.

Mentorship, Participation, and a New Municipal Leadership Network

The result of toxic leadership is cynicism. People stop voting. Good citizens stop running for office. Those

who do often arrive motivated by influence, contracts, or the illusion of prestige — not by the burden of service. Here in British Columbia, the same corrosion has taken hold. Investigations stall. Whistleblowers are stigmatized. HR policies meant to protect staff are weaponized to protect reputation. At every turn, those who speak truth are met with silence, delay, or retaliation. This is not democracy — this is decay.

And yet, the cure is right before us: participation, mentorship, and municipal unity. Local democracy can and must become the nursery of renewal. Educated and experienced candidates can help prepare new ones, sharing knowledge and integrity rather than hoarding it. Through such cooperation, we can reverse the apathy that corruption breeds — and restore civic health at its roots. Mayors and experienced councillors across British Columbia could establish a province-wide mentorship network for new council candidates and first-term officials. Such a network would close the knowledge gaps exploited by senior governments and build a new generation of leaders grounded in transparency and integrity.

This is work I would gladly assist with directly were it not for Crown's ongoing misuse of procedural mechanisms to silence my journalism (for reasons that should be obvious by now) — which only underscores the need for the reforms discussed here. A mentorship network built by municipalities, rather than imposed from above, would strengthen local democracy at its roots and provide the structural resilience our province desperately needs.

Lessons From History and the Cost of Obedience

One hundred and eleven years ago this Christmas, soldiers on both sides of the First World War laid down their arms in the spontaneous truces of 1914 — proof that compassion can pierce even the machinery of war. Yet that moment of peace was quickly condemned by military command, and a culture of rigid, top-down obedience took root instead. Over the generations that have followed, that same doctrine of unquestioned authority seeped into civil institutions, breeding the very toxicity we now struggle to root out.

Its legacy is visible even here at home — in what appears to be the unmarked graves of Indigenous children who were taken from their families under the same ideology of obedience and control that once silenced soldiers on the front lines. Many of those children were the descendants of heroes who helped defeat fascism abroad, only to have their own lives erased by the lingering rot of colonial hierarchy. This is the true cost of toxic leadership when left unchallenged across generations.

When leaders exploit structural gaps for personal security or institutional advantage, democracy itself begins to die. We have seen this globally — from scandals where power has been perverted into proof of dominance, to authoritarian tactics now echoing in our own institutions. These acts stem from the same root: leaders proving they can get away with something, instead of proving that they shouldn't.

The recent resurfacing of Epstein-related revelations in the United States — and the disturbing historical claims of “human safaris” during the Sarajevo siege — both show how corruption metastasizes when

systems lack transparency. In one case, the elite allegedly treated human suffering as entertainment; in another, power circles shielded their own crimes through mutual blackmail, trading exposure for silence. These stories are more than scandals — they are parables of moral collapse. They reveal what happens when power becomes detached from virtue and when governance becomes a performance rather than a duty.

PFAS "forever chemicals," for example, are now everywhere in the environment. This, too, was preventable. Internal company documents show that by the 1960s, major manufacturers like DuPont and 3M had evidence of PFAS toxicity and persistence yet kept critical findings from workers, regulators, and the public. Meanwhile, the U.S. military became an early, large-scale user of PFAS-based AFFF firefighting foam, with a formal military specification issued in 1970 and widespread adoption in the 1970s — decisions that helped seed contamination around bases and airports for decades. Only in recent years have we seen mandated phase-outs of PFAS foams for training, and in 2024 the U.S. EPA established the first enforceable national drinking-water standards for several PFAS and designated key PFAS as hazardous under Superfund.

The lesson is stark: when leadership buries evidence and prioritizes appearances over truth, entire generations pay the price. If we do not challenge toxic cultures now, they will be inherited — amplified — by the next generation. If we fail to fix this from the ground up — if we ignore this call to reform — then our sovereignty is not truly sovereign at all. A democracy that cannot protect its people from its own systems is one that has already surrendered its moral authority.

A Call to Action for Every Municipality in British Columbia

I am calling on every Mayor and Council to commit openly to the following:

- Restore fairness, transparency, accountability, and integrity in every municipal public body.
- Address toxic leadership wherever it appears, regardless of rank or reputation.
- End stigma — against employees, citizens, or critics — as a prerequisite to rebuilding trust.
- Champion independent oversight as essential to human safety and civic health.
- Strengthen local democracy through mentorship, unity, and shared decision-making.

Next year, if no candidate in your municipality is running on these reforms, I respectfully ask you to adopt them yourselves. If you choose not to — or commit and later fail to act — that, too, will be instructive to the people you serve.

A special acknowledgment is again owed once again to View Royal Mayor Sid Tobias, whose warnings about concentrated power capture the urgency of this moment. His call for new voices, new candidates, and democratic renewal reflects the path forward not only for municipalities, but for all levels of governance in this country.

Let this be the beginning of a new covenant between the governed and those who govern:

No more **silence**.

No more **loopholes**.

No more leadership without accountability.

With respect and resolve,
Philip Perras

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