

# Watershed Health Letter to the Editor

**N.B. This letter has been sent to Nanaimo's news outlets, current City of Nanaimo Mayor and Council as well as all candidates for Mayor and Council.**

In Nanaimo, the city often called the "hidden green jewel", our iconic western red cedars are dying. Many are dying because they cannot get enough moisture during increasingly dry summers. These trees are our "canaries in the coal mine".

It is not too late to make a difference. We can reduce the impact of these annual droughts on our local environment by restoring and protecting Nanaimo's watersheds and keeping our cherished city green.

Although we live on the "wet coast", rain water in our urban area never has a chance to properly penetrate into the soil to recharge the ground water and the aquifer. Up to 80% of the rain water that falls on our urban area is diverted into storm water drains, piped and flushed out to sea. Urban storm water management, as practiced in Nanaimo, has now reached a critical turning point. Now is the time to set a new course.

We believe that to effect the necessary change requires strong policy direction from the top. We call upon Nanaimo's prospective mayor and council to lead us into a water resilient future by adopting the following policy:

- Shift from engineered-focused storm water management to a more sustainable interdisciplinary rainwater management approach, and eliminate existing institutional silos.
- Apply a water security approach when considering approval for all community development and infrastructure upgrades.
- Apply the Water Balance Methodology to restore environmental flows in our urban streams.
- Re-instate the Advisory Committee on Environmental Sustainability.

Nanaimonites heading to the polls in October want to know where our future decision makers stand on the future management of our watersheds.

signed,

## **Nanaimo Watershed Health Community of Practice**

Jean-Michel Hanssens, Streamkeeper, Departure Creek

Nina Evans-Locke, Streamkeeper, Walley Creek

Bernie Heinrichs, Streamkeeper, Millstone River

Wally Wells, P. Eng., Board Director, Nanaimo & Area Land Trust

Craig Evans, The Five Acre Farm - Harewood

Paul Chapman, Acting Executive Director, Nanaimo & Area Land Trust