

City of Courtenay Candidates

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Questions to the Courtenay Candidates

1. Please tell us how you currently use the Cumberland Trail Network?
2. Do you support mountain biking and how do you envision mountain biking being part of Comox Valley's future?
3. Why do you feel that the Cumberland trails are an important community asset/amenity for the Comox Valley, and how would you champion them?
4. Would you support a permanent regional funding stream for UROC to continue to manage the Trail Network? What would a sustainable local government funding model for the Cumberland Trail Network look like to you?

For reference we included the UROC Trails Strategic Plan to every candidate.

CITY OF COURTENAY MAYORAL CANDIDATES

Bob Wells

1. I have hiked and cycled the trails over the past 19 years I have lived in the Comox Valley.
2. I believe Mountain Biking has and will continue to be a major draw for people to move to the Comox Valley and visit on biking trips.
3. I have voted in favor of financial support while on the CVRD and have supported the MRDT (Hotel Tax) to be spent on UROC projects.
4. I see the MRDT (Hotel Tax) as a logical way to help support UROC projects as the funds are collected from visitors staying at Courtenay Hotels and local short-term rentals who are directly benefiting. As a Village of Cumberland amenity, I would also encourage the Cumberland Council to look for ways to support UROC financially in a sustainable manner.

Erik Eriksson

1. I don't use the Cumberland Trail Network.
2. I support mountain biking. It looks like a fun, healthful and challenging activity.
3. The Cumberland Mountain Biking Trail Network is highly regarded by mountain bikers from all over. As such, they attract visitors who use accommodation, restaurants and pubs and they check out the shopping (especially the bike stores). i.e., it is an economic generator.

It is my ambition to have the Comox Valley adopt the brand Festival Valley. There is a festival that celebrates every aspect of the Comox Valley. I would say that Mountain Biking Competitions are festivals, as are softball and hockey tournaments. That is how I would champion the trails.

4. I would like to see a financial case put forward by UROC before I can offer an opinion on these two questions.

No response recieved from:

- Aaron Dowker

CITY OF COURTENAY COUNCIL CANDIDATES

Starr Winchester

1. I do not personally use the Cumberland Trail Network, but I have lots of friends who use it.
2. I support mountain biking and it seems to be more popular every year. Yes, it will definitely be a part of the future here in the Comox Valley.
3. Like all our outdoor activities here in the Comox Valley, Cumberland Trails are very popular. I would like to see the formation of Tourism Comox Valley. They have the knowledge and experience to promote the many outdoor activities here in the Comox Valley.
4. Until I have reviewed the Regional District budget, I could not commit to a permanent regional funding stream.

Will Cole-Hill

1. I enjoy biking the Cumberland Trail network as well as walking them with my family and our dog (on-leash).
2. As a mountain biker myself, I see the value of mountain biking to our community. It provides recreation for thousands of Comox Valley residents and brings many visitors to the Comox Valley as well. As a region we need to acknowledge the value of mountain biking as an economic driver. The combination of the Cumberland trails and the bike park at Mount Washington is a potent draw for tourism in our region.

I believe mountain biking will continue to gain popularity here in the Comox Valley and will continue to be a reason that people come here, either to visit or to live.

3. The Cumberland trails are an important asset that benefit the Comox Valley community both directly and indirectly. Those of us who bike and walk the trails appreciate them for the recreational opportunities and beauty they provide. Even those who do not ride or walk the Cumberland trails benefit indirectly from the economic activity that these trails generate.

As a director of the CVRD I have championed the Cumberland trails by supporting funding for UROC. On a personal level, I support the Cumberland trails by talking them up to friends from other communities who are thinking of visiting the Valley - it's a pretty easy sell!

4. The CVRD has supported UROC through grants from the recreation grant and Area C's grant in aid funding. I would like to see this funding continue. In the longer term I see potential for the CVRD and the Village of Cumberland to partner in a sustainable local government funding model.

Evan Jolicoeur

1. Trail run, walk, and transit (from where i live to the lake and back). I use it for recreating, wellness, and socializing. I also use the trails to walk the dogs :)
2. I do support mountain biking, and appreciate the dedication of the volunteers who create, maintain, and support the trail network so that all users, including bikers can enjoy our forests and ecosystems in a way that limits human impact. Mountain biking will and continue to be a huge economic driver, social connector, and health & wellness asset to our communities. I believe we can collectively, in collaboration with TVI (our current tourism contract holder in Comox Valley), continue to expand our external marketing and promotion activities to highlight the exciting opportunities in the Cumberland trail networks and the surrounding

communities. It's truly an easy sell - beautiful natural environment, friendly community, diverse shops & restaurants and a thriving art and cultural scene.

3. They provide accessible opportunities for all people to experience varying degrees of experiences - from exercise, to sport, to socializing, to mental/physical/spiritual wellness. It is an important asset in that it highlights the power of community, drives huge amounts of economic growth and spending, and supports locals with their social, recreational and health needs. I will champion the trails by being a spokesperson and marketer while abroad representing the community as a leader, why also supporting opportunities for different levels of government to provide financial and other support for ongoing maintenance, growth and protection of the trails & forest surrounding them.
4. I am open to this idea as I have never thought about UROC coming under the umbrella of municipal/regional services/programming. I would love to learn more about what your group, members and users would like to see out of a regional approach. At the moment I am a proponent of the Regional Parks service and to push it further to a Regional Parks board, which would oversee the management, acquisition and protection of parks. Previously, other services that have supported regional assets or issues have added a nominal dollar amount on taxpayers to support those programs (eg. MRDT tax, or homelessness tax). I believe it would be challenging to support one specific service such as UROC, but perhaps if the Cumberland trail network joined a larger service/program for the region, we would be able to support it with regional dollars and resources. Happy to learn and listen to ideas that you may have.

Michael L. Gilbert

I will try to answer your questions with these thoughts. I do not trail bike, but I know young families that do, and they really enjoy it. It seems to provide a sport for family involvement which is great. As with any venture, there requires up-keep and maintenance along with growth in membership. I'm sure there are grants out there to take advantage of especially if it's a good idea. If I can help if elected, I will. I only ask that you work with Mother Nature as you build out your trails and best of luck. Hope this helps.

Melanie McCollum

1. I have used the Cumberland Trail Network for several decades as a mountain biker – one of the reasons I moved here from Victoria in 2006. I'm a UROC member, and I ride with friends and my daughter several times a week when I'm not in the midst of an election campaign.
2. Absolutely. Most of my free time is spent on my mountain bike and it's been a joy to see the network grow and develop over the years. I envision mountain biking to continue as a key recreation amenity in our area.
3. The Cumberland trail network is a wonderful recreational amenity for residents and tourists alike. The trail network of this size for walkers, runners and mountain bikers is the envy of many active communities. It's a recreation destination and a draw for visitors to check out our region.
4. Yes, currently UROC receives \$25000 a year from the CVRD recreation granting program. I'm supportive of seeing that funding continues to contribute to UROC's operations. I believe the model we have in place is a good mechanism to support UROC and the Cumberland Trail Network.

Brennan Day

1. I'm a semi-regular rider, with absolutely no skill, and my mother-in-law was the former owner of Forbidden Cycles back when the Valley's reputation as a cycling destination was in its infancy and is a bike nut.
2. Mountain biking is rapidly becoming a major, if not THE, tourism driver for large parts of the Comox Valley;

we need to make sure we are expanding our tourism and hospitality offerings around this draw as it presents a great year-round experience here in the Valley.

3. They are critical as an economic driver, as well as a relatively inexpensive family activity for our local population. Expanded connectivity between our trail networks and all of our communities would be a huge draw taking cars off the road and encouraging tourism all in one go. The advent of electric bikes has shrunk the Comox Valley in size for this type of network, and the grind up the hill to Cumberland to access the trails is no longer a hurdle to many users. Let's work with all our municipal and KFN partners to better integrate existing trail systems and build on Cumberland's reputation as a cycling destination.
4. As with anything, the devil would be in the details. I would be open to discussions with the RD/Courtenay/Comox/Cumberland to this idea if we can recapture some of the expense through hotel tax etc. There is no question the net economic benefit is there, so what are we waiting for?

David Frisch

1. I first rode the Cumberland Trails in 1998. Since then, I've watched as it was developed by dedicated volunteers to become a premier destination in the world and a true delight for mountain trail users. I now use the trails on a regular basis with my kids, my friends, and the odd running/adventure race.
2. I think the future of mtb'ing in the valley is now. I started mtb'ing in 1989, so I can see the popularity in context. The question is how we should leverage our natural assets and interests to improve our community health and quality of living. UROC's model of relationship building, and trail development should also be looked to be replicated in other areas of the valley. A regional plan to responsibly harness increased tourism should be contemplated.
3. The Cumberland Trails are already a significant economic driver in the valley. They are used in our Tourism plan and will likely only become more popular around the world. I also see an opportunity for our trail networks not only as economic drivers, but for integrating health and wellness into our children and future generations. Access to nature (trees, creeks, wildlife, etc) and communion with the natural world should be ingrained into our lifestyle for both physical and mental resilience. What programs or new relationships (SD71) are needed to teach children about the opportunities these trails offer.
4. Absolutely yes. I'd be open to discuss all options for a funding model, but I'd suggest that a Memorandum of Understanding and dedicated funding from parks and recreation to support the governance of UROC and its work to build and maintain, not only the trails, but the relationships with landowners and the community, would be wise.

Lyndsey Northcott

1. I appreciate the Cumberland trail network. My son and I love to use the Cumberland trails. It has become a one of my favorite spots we visit on Vancouver Island.
2. I do support mountain biking. It should continue to be a well-loved and favorite thing to do here. We can as a community make more themed events around mountain biking.
3. Yes, I would support a permanent regional funding stream for UROC to continue to manage the Trail Network.

Doug Hillian

1. Although I have a road bike, I am primarily a hiker and have walked many trails in Cumberland, but my son and his friends are avid mountain bikers who use the Trail Network regularly. They confirm my long-held

impression of what a superb system you have built.

More generally, I played soccer for Cumberland in my early days in the Comox Valley, am a long-time supporter of the Cumberland Forest Society, and have encouraged and supported the Regional District funding that has helped secure forest land preservation in our watershed around Comox Lake.

2. Apart from being a great sporting pastime, mountain biking is a significant tourist draw and generator of business activity. It is a big part of what has helped Cumberland to thrive in recent years and is worthy of promotion and celebration. Its impact goes beyond Cumberland, providing recreational opportunity and business benefit to the entire Valley. I see mountain biking continuing to grow as a vital part of what makes the Comox Valley such a special place that more and more people want to visit or live in.
3. The trails serve the many people who use them through facilitating access to outdoor recreation, which promotes good health and well-being. Although I know that some misuse the opportunity, there is overwhelming benefit to getting people into the outdoors to enhance their appreciation of our natural landscape and the importance of protecting it. In addition, there is benefit to the business community throughout the Comox Valley, as commerce is generated, and jobs are created by people coming from far and wide to use the trails. An additional benefit is the collaboration between UROC, industry and local government in the development of the trails and the related stewardship of the land they are on and the surrounding areas. We also derive community benefit from the volunteer involvement that sustains the trails and the UROC organization. When people are engaged in building and maintaining such a very popular community amenity, it contributes to their own health and well-being and the overall good of the community. This is particularly the case in providing a positive and healthy outlet for our youth, along with riders of all ages.

I would champion the trails through encouraging promotion by Tourism Vancouver Island and our local Chambers of Commerce, and through advocating for local community and government support.

4. I think an ongoing regional funding model makes good sense, in much the same way that regional funding supports parks and recreation in general, as well as providing facilities for many sports and leisure activities. It would be important for Regional District staff to weigh in on how this might be accomplished, perhaps taking examples from funding models elsewhere. A secure funding stream, confirmed through a formal service agreement, would provide your organization with stability, and better enable you to concentrate on continuing to build, maintain and enjoy the Trail Network.

No response recieved from:

- Steffan Chmuryk
- Jin Lin
- Wendy Mori
- Deana Simki
- Manno Theos
- Philip Adams