

Saanich Spotlight



Spring update from Mayor Haynes

New solutions to mental health emergency calls

Recently, Council made calls to action to our senior governments on the need to provide health-centered solutions that effectively address the community issues of addictions, opioid deaths, brain injury and mental health. We unanimously approved requesting the province to take a new look at the 911 emergency call system for families and individuals dealing with mental health emergencies.

Statistics Canada reports one in five families across Canada is dealing with mental health issues. This includes families and individuals across our neighbourhoods and the known connections of mental health to homelessness. Currently, emergency calls for mental health fall largely to the 911 system. The resources available for response depend on when the call arrives. Meanwhile, there is a growing appreciation that more robust health-focused solutions are required for individuals experiencing a mental health crisis.

In Saanich, our Police Department participates in two Integrated Mobile Crisis Teams (IMCRT). These teams are made up of Island Health nurses, counsellors, child and youth mental

health clinicians and police officers from Saanich and Victoria. The IMCRT provides response in the afternoons and evenings seven days a week for people in psychiatric crisis. They provide consultation, mobile crisis response and assessment, short-term follow-up and referral services. There is also the regional Assertive Community Treatment team (ACT). Made up of mental-health nurses, police, parole officers and social workers, this team helps connect vulnerable people with longer term support services.

These holistic models have proven effectiveness. However, because of limited resources they cannot respond to all those suffering a mental health crisis. Outside regular hours, or at times of multiple emergencies, 911 calls for mental health fall to uniformed patrol officers. Consequently, more resources to provide additional teams of mental health nurses, social workers, community support are needed.

Separately, the 811 call system operated by the HealthLink BC part of the Ministry of Health provides access to a health service navigator. These help navigate health services, but do not enable rapid assistance.

These complex-care, societal problems are collectively outside the capacity and the scope of municipalities and our police departments. Saanich Council is arguing these need to be addressed by appropriate funding and commitments to new policy and legal frameworks from the provincial government.



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UN Decade of Ecosystem Restoration

Saanich supports UN's Decade on Ecosystem Restoration

Mayor Fred Haynes has signed a [Proclamation](#) demonstrating Saanich's support and participation in the [United Nations \(UN\) Decade on Ecosystem Restoration](#) 2021 to 2030.

"We are thrilled to participate in this global initiative that will increase public literacy on the importance of environmental stewardship," said Mayor Fred Haynes. "The coming decade will build on our momentum, in partnership with the community, to help heal natural areas and enhance biodiversity. Every action, big or small, will also help us mitigate the effects of climate change."



For the first year, Saanich Parks will build awareness and connect with residents about what ecosystem restoration is and how they can get involved in park stewardship. Saanich Parks already has a strong [Pulling Together Volunteer Program](#) that focuses on ecosystem restoration that is currently operating in a limited way with COVID-19 protocols. When provincial health orders allow, community events will resume to further engage with residents to learn, participate in and celebrate stewardship in Saanich Parks.

There will be great opportunities in the years ahead for Saanich residents to learn about and care for parks. Our broad goal is to work together with community members to continue to restore and sustain natural park environments for future generations. This will include activities to learn about and connect with local ecosystems to the hands-on work of restoring degraded ecosystems in Saanich Parks. Saanich Parks hopes that many residents will be engaged in these fun, healthy activities that positively contribute to the community and the environment.

The UN Decade provides a good opportunity to demonstrate and highlight Saanich's commitment to environmental stewardship as recognized in Saanich's Official Community Plan; Climate Plan; Parks, Recreation and Culture Master Plan; and the Older Adults Strategy.



"Saanich Parks is a leader in community stewardship and invasive species management which are both important aspects of ecosystem restoration," said Parks, Trails and Recreation Committee Chair and Councillor Judy Brownoff. "We have strong existing partnerships with community groups such as Peninsula Streams, and many 'friends of parks' groups. We are committed to restoring natural areas and biodiversity within our parks to benefit the long term health of our community."

More information on related events and initiatives will be shared as it becomes available at [Saanich.ca](https://www.saanich.ca).



New Parks field guide

Saanich Parks released a beautiful new [field guide](#) to inspire a passion for nature discoveries in parks close to home.

This illustrated field guide highlights some of the plants and animals found in Saanich parks and the different types of ecosystems where they live. It is a visual learning tool aimed at youth, but the intent is to encourage learning and enjoyment for all park visitors.

“We hope our new guide will enhance the experience of our park visitors and encourage them to be curious about their natural surroundings,” said Manager Community Development and Business Systems Nathalie Dechaine. “The guide is part of our [Natural Intelligence](#) initiative that aims to improve citizens’ knowledge about our natural world and how we connect with it. In deepening the connection with nature, we tend to be happier, healthier and motivated to protect it.”

The field guide was developed to have the look and feel of an artist’s nature notes highlighting some of the plants and animals that live in our local ecosystems. Illustrated by local artist [Kristi Bridgeman](#), her artwork captures the spirit and beauty of the unique nature that exists around us. Saanich Parks will develop resources for families and educators to use with the field guide so they can broaden their learning while experiencing these lovely places.

Saanich parks provide vital habitat for plants and animals. Please help us protect these special places by treading carefully, taking only memories and leaving nothing but footprints.

The field guide is available at saanich.ca/fieldguide.



50
years

Gordon Head Recreation Centre celebrates 50th anniversary

The Gordon Head Recreation Centre officially opened in 1971 by then Mayor Hugh Curtis and was the first multi-purpose community recreation facility constructed in Saanich. The 20,000 square foot facility housed a six lane 25 metre swimming pool and dressing rooms, a glassed viewing area, a hall with a stage, and miscellaneous offices and rooms.

The centre was the third facility to be built in Saanich under the 1967 Indoor Recreation bylaw, after G. R. Pearkes Arena and the Saanich Senior Citizens Activity Centre at Hampton Park (now known as the Les Passmore Seniors Centre). Now, two renovations and 50 years later, Gordon Head Recreation Centre has added preschool space, a dance studio, a weight room, family change rooms and leisure pools, a teen centre and multipurpose programming and rental spaces. In 1995 the Lambrick Skate Park was constructed adjacent to the centre, acting as an outdoor extension of the facility. Programming expanded with the addition of an Annex, use of the Bert Richman building, and shared use at Gordon Head Middle School. The reach of Gordon Head programming is well beyond the building walls and has had a continued wonderful impact on the neighbourhood as a community meeting space, welcoming all patrons to maintain their physical, mental and social health.



Many patrons of all ages often say Gordon Head is where they learned to swim and attended day camps – now there is so much more including, martial arts, yoga and wellness programs, aquatic certification training, day camp leadership, and music programs. The list will again be endless after the pandemic is controlled. We hope our community will celebrate the many years of service, the width and depth of our programming, and look forward to the future, to when we reimagine our offerings post-pandemic and welcome back our community for generations to come.



*Photo Credit: Gordon Head Recreation Centre pool, 1973
(Saanich Archives 1981-021-012a)*



*Photo Credit: Gordon Head Recreation Centre, exterior
(Saanich Archives 1982-001-023d)*



Safety Improvement Award

The District of Saanich won the Safety Improvement Award at the BC Municipal Safety Association's annual awards celebration in 2020.

The Safety Improvement Award recognizes local governments for activities that improve [experience rating](#), and reduce injuries, illness, disease and fatalities.

"Our success stems from the commitment that all staff have to our safety culture," said Occupational Health and Safety Manager Rebecca Chow. "Every employee is committed to take action, support their colleagues and follow our health and safety processes."



The momentum for this award started several years ago with the redesign of Saanich's Workplace Injury Management (WIM) program. The introduction of the WIM program resulted in improved injury reporting, more focus on stay at work and return to work opportunities, and an increase in awareness of alternate duties for employees returning to work. These positive changes provided additional support to ill or injured employees and resulted in a reduction to Saanich's experience rating.

An experience rating is a discount or surcharge that allows WorkSafeBC to ensure the costs of compensation for workplace injuries are distributed fairly. Creating a safer and healthier work environment and helping injured workers recover can improve experience rating, reduce claim costs and reduce insurance amounts.

The Occupation Health and Safety (OHS) Division supports Saanich's OHS and WIM Programs both of which are Certificate of Recognition certified by WorkSafeBC. OHS also plays a key role in supporting Saanich's response and planning efforts related to the COVID-19 pandemic.



First meeting of Saanich Council was 115 years ago!

The first meeting of the Saanich Municipal Council was held on March 10, 1906 at the municipal hall located on Glanford Avenue near Vanalman Avenue.

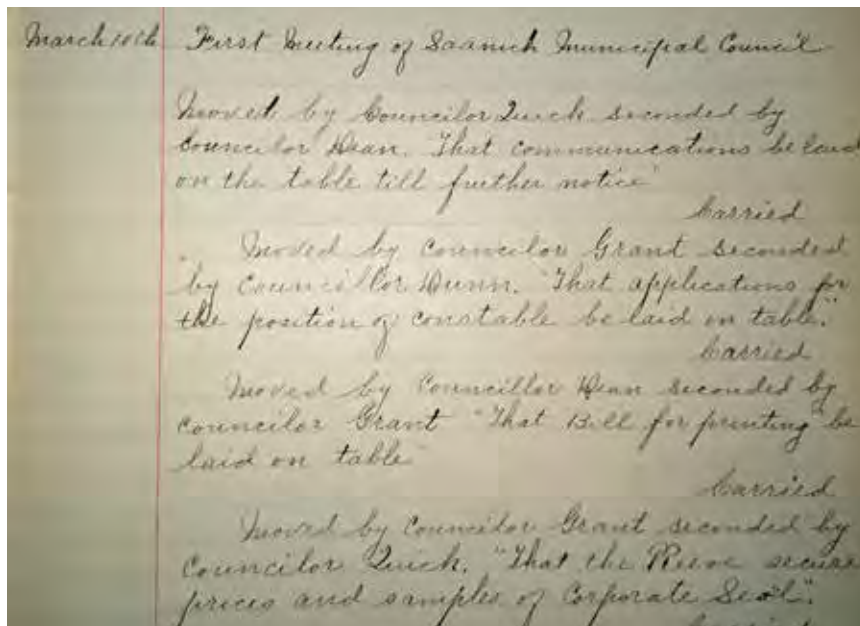
This hall was used until 1911 when the second municipal hall opened on West Saanich Road. In attendance at the meeting was Reeve Thomas A. Brydon and Councillors G. Deans, H.J. Dunn, J.A. Grant, Fred G. Quick, and Henry Puckle who recorded the minutes.

The first order of business for the newly formed municipal government was for Reeve to "secure prices and samples of a corporate seal." Next, staff needed to be hired. A deadline was set for receiving applications for the positions of clerk, treasurer, and assessor, as well as the joint position of constable and sanitary officer. After that, it was moved "that council meet the Finance Minister as soon as possible to secure the best terms for this year!" The final order of business was to "make inquiries regarding land sites." The meeting was then adjourned until Saturday, March 17 at 8 p.m.

The following weeks saw Council busily passing bylaws, establishing committees, and reviewing applications for the positions of clerk and constable.



James Rutherford Carmichael, Municipal Clerk, in the foreground on the steps of the first municipal hall on Glanford Avenue, ca. 1907 (Saanich Archives, 2014-003-002)



Detail from District of Saanich, Council Minutes, 1906



Saanich encourages budget education with new tool

Council's deliberations on the [draft 2021 to 2025 Financial Plan](#) are well underway, but there's still time to participate!

Saanich's [online budget education tool](#) is available for all residents to explore and learn. The real-time results allow residents to see how budget changes could impact their property taxes. Saanich used the tool for the first time in 2020 and saw more than 300 visitors to the site. Comments submitted by residents in the tool will be provided to Council as citizen feedback.

The tool is available to explore until the end of March at saanich.ca/budget.



Educational resources

Residents may also review a variety of informational fact sheets to help them learn about Saanich's important decision-making processes:

- [Understanding how financial planning works in Saanich](#)
- [Saanich service delivery – where your tax dollars go](#)
- [How Saanich plans connect](#)

Share your input

Residents can share their input on the draft financial plan anytime with Saanich staff via email at budget@saanich.ca and with Mayor and Council at council@saanich.ca.

Next steps

Council deliberates on the draft Financial Plan over the next couple of months. Council must adopt the Financial Plan and Tax Rate Bylaws by May 15, 2021. Property taxes are due July 2, 2021.



Cedar Hill Golf Course Clubhouse flood

On February 14, 2021 there was a flood at the Cedar Hill Golf Course Clubhouse.

Our crews determined the flood was caused by a faulty sprinkler fitting. We continue to assess the damage and we can't yet speak to a timeline for repairs or when the clubhouse will re-open.

The clubhouse has been closed since January 2020 for repairs and restoration following a previous flood.

The clubhouse closure will not impact the play of golf.

We will share more information when it becomes available.



Public Wi-Fi terms of use

Saanich introduces new terms of use for public Wi-Fi

The District of Saanich provides public Wi-Fi for guests visiting municipal facilities. As of March 1, 2021, Saanich implemented new terms of use for guests who choose to use the Saanich public Wi-Fi network in all municipal facilities including recreation centres.

Similar to many other public Wi-Fi networks, guest users must read and accept terms and conditions before receiving access to the network. It's important to note that wireless access is provided as a public service free of charge on an "as is" basis and Saanich staff are not able to provide technical assistance.





Change in how to claim your home owner grant

As of January 1, 2021, all home owner grant applications are submitted directly to the province. Residents in Saanich no longer apply through the municipality.

What does this mean?

- Starting January 1, 2021, Saanich can no longer accept retroactive or new applications for the home owner grant.
- The province will be entirely responsible for the home owner grant program for the 2021 and future tax years.
- All home owners will apply directly to the province either online or over the phone.
- The eligibility criteria for the program remains the same.
- The provincial application will be available early in 2021.

Please visit gov.bc.ca/homeownergrant or call the province's home owner grant office at 250-387-0555 for more information.



Celebrating our diversity: The Muslim Women and Girls Program

Before COVID-19 arrived, Saanich had one of the fastest growing social groups for Muslim women and girls.

These strong females routinely came together to lift weights, hike and cook as a part of a newly designed program. But the story of how we got there started many years earlier and illustrates the resilience of the human spirit.

The Syrian Refugee Crisis spurred the Government of Canada to commit to resettling 25,000 refugees across the nation by 2016. In preparation for these arrivals, the Vancouver Island Refugee Response Team (VIRRT) was created. This group oversaw the local placement and wellness of around 400 refugees; and examined such issues as affordable housing, culturally sensitive health services, language instruction and meaningful employment.

As a member of VIRRT, Saanich partnered with the Masjid Al-Iman to provide programming for newly arrived refugee children. Based out of Colquitz Middle School, the program was developed to provide physical activity, culturally safe social interactions and language instruction in English. For children who were thrown together in a foreign place, with other families from multiple other countries, these programs were the key to successfully settling of so many traumatized families.

In an effort to keep these vital services flowing, Saanich sought grant funding from the agency now known as Canadian Women and Sport. In 2018, a grant was awarded to Saanich's Community Services Department, one of only 20 nation-wide, and the Muslim Women and Girls program was born.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Programmer, Jason Jones often describes how uniquely vulnerable Muslim women and girls are in our community. The stresses of social isolation are heightened for this group due to cultural restrictions that prohibit them from participating in general public



recreation activities. To combat this barrier, Jason has developed programming dedicated to fit their specific needs and interests. The women and girls decide what they'd like to do, and then Jason works to provide a culturally safe way to offer them the program. He also prepared recreation staff in our community centres for the interactions they would have with the newcomers. Muslim Cultural Learnings sessions helped to shape the excellent customer service our newest resident would come to expect from the Parks, Recreation and Community Services Department. A dynamic and respectful balance has earned Saanich the trust of these families who now call Saanich their home.

The Muslim Women and Girls program continues to grow in popularity and participants have had the opportunity to try a wide variety of activities including self-defense, martial arts, cooking classes, skating, yoga, archery, stretching, strength training, hiking, swimming, various sports and even Zumba. Jason has also continued to nurture the relationship between Saanich and the Masjid Al-Iman by hosting a community Iftar meal in Council Chambers to celebrate Ramadan in 2019. Undaunted by the current global pandemic, Jason has found COVID-safe ways to keep the Women and Girls engaged with scaled-back activities. He is also actively developing plans for new programs geared toward Muslim men and family programming.

If you would like to learn more about cultural events in Saanich, please visit the [Community Services Diversity and Equity webpage](#)

Or [Vancouver Island Refugee Response Team](#)

Or [The BC Muslim Association-Victoria](#)



Create a grab and go bag!

Having essential supplies handy in an emergency is a vital part of preparedness.

A disaster could force you to spend an extended time away from home. *Preparedness kits don't need to be completed all at once.* By adding items over time you can take important but manageable steps toward being more prepared.

Your 'grab and go' backpack should contain items that will allow you to be as comfortable as possible for at least 6-12 hours. Every person and pet in your family should have a bag with basic survival supplies and other items that meet their personal needs. Consider keeping a grab and go bag at work and school.

These items support security and peace of mind.

- Photocopies or password-protected USB drive of important wallet contents and insurance policies (these can be stored online in email accounts as well!)
- key contacts list, cell phone and phone card
- notebook and pen or retractable pencil
- supply of cash in small bills and coins
- spare keys for home, car, other
- recent photos of family and pets
- books, cards, puzzles
- chargers and adapters for cell phones and other electronics included in your grab and go bags

If you are keen to complete your grab and go bag see the [Regional Guide to Preparedness](#) and watch the [Get your Kit Together](#) video on our Saanich Emergency Program website.





Birthday video messages!

Did you know that your friendly neighbourhood fire fighters are helping Saanich residents celebrate birthdays, special milestones and retirements during these times of social distancing?

Saanich fire fighters are sending 15-30 second video messages to celebrate birthdays for children ages 4 to 10, milestone birthdays ages 50 or 100, and retirements. Lights, sirens and Sparky the fire dog will brighten the day and bring smiles to the faces of your family and community.

Send your request to **fireprevention@saanich.ca** and include your name, the special event, and who you are celebrating. Make sure to give us five business days to allow for production of your video message.





2020 climate action highlights

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been an incredible amount of climate work implemented by the District, our partners, and community members in 2020, with many inspiring examples of adapting climate action to new constraints. Some of the highlights include:



- The Saanich Climate Plan was awarded the Community Energy Association 2020 Climate & Energy Action Award and the 2020 PIBC Silver Award for Excellence in Policy Planning – City and Urban Areas by the Planning Institute of BC.
- Saanich was one of 88 global cities to score the top 'A' grade in 2020 from the CDP for reporting on climate and environmental impacts, completed as part of our commitment to the Global Covenant of Mayors on Climate.
- The latest community greenhouse gas (GHG) inventory (2018) shows a 14% decrease in emissions from our 2007 baseline and the latest corporate GHG inventory (2020) shows a 19% decrease in emissions from our 2007 baseline. This is good news, but more reductions are needed for us to be on track to meet our targets of a 50% reduction in community emissions by 2030 and corporate emissions by 2025.
- Saanich launched the Residents' Climate Action Guidebook to help residents measure their personal GHG emissions using the Carbon Calculator and make a simple 3-point plan to reduce their climate impact and prepare for a changing climate.
- [One Planet Saanich](#) moved to virtual meetings and workshops to help stakeholders continue to implement their [One Planet Action Plans](#) during COVID-19 and invite new participants to the program.
- New buildings are now required to have parking stalls electrified and ready to install EV chargers, and be built to the next steps of the BC Energy Step Code to achieve higher energy efficiency
- Over 100 households in Saanich received Saanich top-up rebates to switch from fossil fuels to renewable energy heating with heat pumps
- The District joined the Canada-wide Love Food Hate Waste campaign and shared food waste prevention tips with residents
- [Pulling Together](#) volunteers were active on 44 stewardship sites and replanted 25 sites with diverse native plants.
- The District launched the [Neighbour to Neighbour Project](#), a central hub for a range of Saanich programs and resources that support community connections, with COVID-safe activities for households.
- 100% of our municipal fleet cars are now replaced with electric vehicles (EVs).

Rebates for Renewables

Is 2021 the year you make the switch to renewable energy for your home or vehicle?

Electric vehicle rebates: \$8,000 from the federal and provincial governments, plus \$6,000 from SCRAP-IT BC, plus \$350 rebates for Level 2 chargers! [Saanich.ca/rebates](https://www.saanich.ca/rebates).

Climate-friendly home rebates: until March 31, double rebates for switching from oil or gas heating to a heat pump! \$6,350 plus up to \$1,000 for electrical panel upgrades plus up to \$500 Group Purchase Rebate, plus bonus incentives for doing additional upgrades. [Saanich.ca/rebates](https://www.saanich.ca/rebates).

UPCOMING COUNCIL MEETINGS

We encourage you to tune in to the meeting
webcast at 7 p.m. at saanich.ca

COUNCIL MEETINGS

April 12 **May 10**
April 26 **May 31**

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETINGS

March 22 **May 17**
April 19 **June 14**
May 3

Visit our website to view the latest meeting schedule:
www.saanich.ca/EN/main/local-government/mayor-council/schedule-agendas-minutes.html

