



John Horgan MLA Juan de Fuca

Community Report NOVEMBER 2009

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Respect: missing in action

Last Friday, the Members of the Legislative Assembly did something we don't often do. We sat around the clock – from 9 am Friday morning to 8 am Saturday morning. Why, you may ask, would grown-ups of sound mind and body decide to do such a thing?

The reason was pretty simple for the members of the Opposition Caucus – Democracy.

The debate in the Legislature centred around Bill 21 – a Bill that would legislate striking Ambulance Paramedics back to work and impose a contract, without allowing them a say or the ability to take a vote. Even though paramedics have been required to work throughout the 7 month strike, due to being an essential service, the government made a decision to force a settlement to end the strike, citing the H1N1 epidemic.

We can all agree that the work done by paramedics is important and needs to be performed, even while contract

negotiations are taking place. What we, in the Opposition caucus, disagree with is the tactics deployed by the government to settle this dispute. The BC Liberals could have appointed an independent arbitrator and settled the paramedics strike months ago. Instead, they chose to drag their feet and then impose a settlement, worth less than the last offer, damaging a health care system already reeling from BC Liberal cuts.

When it was my turn to speak to the Bill, I referenced a song made popular by Aretha Franklin in the late 1960s. Respect. That, to me, is the crux of this debate. We, as provincial leaders and law makers, owed it to the paramedics to show them a little respect. These women and men are true heroes. They are first responders in times of a crisis. It could be an emergency facing a community, such as an earthquake or flood, or it could be two paramedics arriving at your home when a family member falls ill.

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Wages were one of the issues at the bargaining table. But there were others. For years they have been trying to get the government's attention about the lack of training provided, the shortage of paramedics, and the state of their equipment. Paramedics assumed the government would recognize the important work they do and treat them with respect as both sides tried to resolve the issues. But, instead, the government chose to use their heavy-hand and impose a settlement, taking away their right to free and respectful bargaining.

There's that word again. Respect.

Deciding to sit in the Legislature for 18 hours last Friday was an easy decision for myself and my colleagues. We didn't think twice about making the sacrifice, however small, to show our support for ambulance paramedics in this province. We value the work they do and we will defend their right to negotiate their own collective agreement. It's time for the government to show the same respect – even if it's just a little bit.

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COMMUNITY EVENTS

November 19 Pearson Student Tea Time Drop In at the Metchosin Community House, 4430 Happy Valley Road. Drop in between 2:30 – 4:30 pm to enjoy a cup of tea and conversation with international students from Pearson College.

November 19 Come out and watch *"The Sting"* at the Juan de Fuca library branch at 6:30 pm. Registration: 250-391-0653.

November 20 – 22 All Sooke Arts & Craft Christmas Show. Lots of choices for the Christmas shoppers. At the Sooke Community Hall, 2037 Shields Road, from 1-8 pm Friday and 10 am – 5 pm on Saturday & Sunday. Info: 250-642-3798.

November 24 Coast Capital Free Swim at the Juan de Fuca Pool from 7:30 – 8:30 pm.

November 26 Drop in Storytime and Crafts for pre-schoolers at the Sooke Library from 11:30 am – Noon. Registration: 250-642-3022.

November 26 Blood Donor Clinic. Did you know that, on average, every 60 seconds someone in Canada requires blood and that one donation can improve or save up to 3 lives? Please support patients in our community by donating. Next clinic: Thursday, Nov 26, Holy Trinity Anglican Church, 1962 Murray Rd. 12:30–7 pm. Book appointment at 1-888-2DONATE

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late last month, John had an opportunity to do two of his favourite things – be in Metchosin and meet with farmers who are passionate about what they do. Along with Lana Popham, MLA for Saanich South and Opposition Agriculture Critic, John spent a rainy afternoon touring several Metchosin farms and talking about a range of issues including updating inspection

regulations, the role of local markets and the importance of supporting organic farming.

↓ John, Jim MacPherson of the Metchosin Agricultural Advisory Committee, and Lana inspecting Dieter Eisenhauer's heritage cucumbers.



↓ John, outside of James Powell's roadside stand, chatting with Bob Mitchell, Adam Saab and Jo Mitchell.



John recently made a statement in the Legislature, commending the work of the Goldstream Food Bank. Here is a synopsis of his comments:

rise today to pay tribute to the men and women across this province who volunteer and work to ensure all British Columbians have access to food, regardless of their financial situation.

In particular, I would like to acknowledge an organization in my community, the Goldstream Food Bank. For many in my area, the Goldstream Food Bank has been a place of last resort. Sadly, despite growing prosperity in the Western Communities of the capital regional district, some days the lineup stretches clear around the block. Although the demand is increasing, donations of food and cash are on the decline.

This year to date they have served over 7,800 people — many of those, families with young children. Last year by this time the number was only 6,100.

Gayle Ireland, president of the Society, says that most of the people who are coming through the door are part of the working poor, people who have jobs but can't stretch their meagre incomes from paycheque to paycheque. The number of seniors that are accessing the food bank is also increasing.

I would like to ask all members from all corners of British Columbia to contemplate their food banks and particularly to see how they can speak to people in their community about increasing their donations as we come to the Christmas season. Let's make sure that everyone this Christmas has access to good, healthy, nutritious food.



← John was one of many in attendance at a ceremony honouring Langford resident Dawn Kropf on her Lifetime Achievement Award from the Langford Women's Institute. John and Dawn are pictured with Langford Councillors Denise Blackwell, Lillian Szpak and Mayor Stew Young.

COMMUNITY EVENTS

November 27 – 29

Stinking Fish Studio Tour.

Seasonal shopping is easy and fun on this tour of some of South Vancouver Island's most exciting artists' studios. Browse, ask questions, see where artists work. Map and artist information: www.stinkingfishstudiotour.com.

December 5

Langford's Annual Christmas Light Up Event.

6 pm at Veteran's Memorial Park.

December 5 Sooke Spirit Festival

includes an afternoon of fun with the Santa Claus Parade, along with music, crafters, concessions and the second annual Inner Harbour Sail Past. Hosted by the Sooke Harbour chamber of Commerce. Info: www.sookepiritfest.com

November/December Langford Christmas Window & Lighting Contest.

Langford is inviting businesses and residents to get in the spirit and have some fun with your staff or family to see who can create the best display. Judges will come by to view your creations but also email a photo to contests@cityoflangford.ca. Winners will be announced at the Annual Christmas Light Up on December 5.

Every Friday until December 4 Drop-in Family Storytime

from 10:30 – 11 am at the Juan de Fuca Library Branch.

Every Friday Vital Vittles

Free lunch served from 11:30 am – 1 pm at Holy Trinity Anglican Church Hall, 1962 Murray Road. Everyone welcome.