
Concerns For OCP Bylaw Draft

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To the Board of Directors,
Cowichan Valley Regional District,

I'm writing as a resident of Electoral Area E to express serious concern regarding the recent adoption and implementation of Official Community Plan Bylaw and the associated zoning and enforcement bylaws now being applied across the Cowichan Valley.

While I understand the need for long-term planning and environmental stewardship, the current direction represents a significant shift in how residents are able to use and manage their own property. Many residents feel these changes have been introduced with insufficient public awareness and limited meaningful consultation.

Of particular concern are the enforcement provisions associated with these bylaws. The allowance for penalties of up to \$50,000 per offence, compounded daily, creates an environment of substantial legal and financial risk for ordinary residents. Even if such penalties are not commonly applied at their maximum, their existence has a chilling effect on individuals' ability to use their land with confidence.

Additionally, the increasingly restrictive nature of zoning - where uses not explicitly permitted are prohibited - raises concerns about the loss of flexibility for rural living. This includes impacts on small-scale food production, home-based income activities, storage of personal equipment such as trailers or recreational vehicles, and the ability to protect property from wildlife.

The cumulative effect of these changes is a perception that residents are losing autonomy over their land, while facing increasing regulatory complexity and potential penalties.

I respectfully request that the CVRD:

Pause further implementation of new zoning restrictions until broader public engagement is conducted.

Provide clear, accessible summaries of how these bylaws affect everyday property use.

Reconsider enforcement frameworks to ensure they are proportionate and not punitive in nature.

Engage directly with residents in open forums to rebuild trust and transparency.

The Cowichan Valley has long been valued for its rural character, self-sufficiency, and community independence. It is essential that future planning respects these values while balancing broader regional goals.

Specific issues that warrant formal public scrutiny include:

- \$50,000-per-day fines for bylaw violations, which could theoretically reach into the millions for ongoing infractions.
- Highly prescriptive rules governing everything from bedroom definitions to chickens and chicken coops, dock usage, shipping container bans, and fence heights.
- Site-specific development blueprints embedded directly into the bylaw, including detailed architectural controls and density caps.
- Major infrastructure implications, with thousands of new units requiring water, sewer, drainage, and fire service capacity that many areas currently lack.
- Timing concerns, with adoption targeted for September - just five weeks before the October election, effectively locking in a near-permanent regulatory framework before voters can respond.
- Watercourses - potentially requiring permits, environmental reports, setbacks and delays, on properties that don't have a choice where the road drainage ends up.
- Minimum 4 ha for an equestrian centre.

Please consider holding a public hearing, so everyone who this affects has a chance to voice their individual concerns.

As an equestrian in the community, myself and countless other equestrians will be affected by the minimum acreage requirement to keep horses. Many barns are operated by families and small businesses which are currently housed on less property than the proposed minimum 4 ha. Where do you expect all these animals to go, especially since current facilities are not grandfathered in? As equestrians, we treat these animals as part of our family. Where are these proposed 4 ha properties to house all these animals going to come from? Who is this actually benefiting this?

Sincerely,

Laura Coppen
Electoral Area E