



LUSH VALLEY

## 2018 COMOX VALLEY FOOD SECURITY SURVEY FOR MUNICIPAL CANDIDATES

### **RESPONSES FROM TOWN OF COMOX MAYORAL, COUNCILLOR & SCHOOL TRUSTEE CANDIDATES**

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*Total Number of Surveys Sent to Town of Comox Candidates: 13*

*Total Number of Candidates Completing Survey: 4*

**CANDIDATE NAME: ALEXANDRA BISSINGER**

**Candidate Position: Councillor**

- 1. In the Comox Valley, we estimate that 1 in 5 people experience poverty and food insecurity. Healthy food and community food engagement have been shown to lead to significant long-term health and well-being outcomes, especially for children. If elected, what would you do to ensure all residents have access to healthy food? How will you support community-based food security programs?**

There are simple low-cost initiatives that I will support as a member of local government, such as ensuring that land zoned for ALR remain zoned as such for generations to come; instituting edible landscapes within the public spaces of the community (re-vegetation bylaw or standards for landscaping of new construction), creating community gardens in densely populated areas of Comox (downtown); and allow personal-scale backyard farming (chicken, bees, etc). Furthermore, there are opportunities to partner with local groups in order to support initiatives such as gleaning and distribution and food literacy initiatives.

- 2. A Vancouver Island Region Food Charter has been written and supported by food security organizations across Vancouver Island (these are funded by *Island Health*). It sets out a vision for a health-oriented, local and equitable food system. If elected, would you support the adoption of this Food Charter for your jurisdiction?**

I am in support of everything mentioned in the Food Charter and I think it will be important to get all the stakeholders (from individual consumers to the large grocery stores in our community), involved if we really want to achieve a just and sustainable food system.

LUSH Valley Food Action Society  
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- 3. The development of progressive food security policy is important at all levels of government. If elected, would you support the development of a Municipal/Regional Food Policy Council? Would you advocate for local jurisdictions to work with other levels of government on food security issues? What food security issues do you see as being a priority for this region?**

For Comox specifically, our biggest challenge will be the fact that our Town is limited in terms of land that is designated ALR, and that we will need to be proactive in ensuring that land is used for sustainable agricultural purposes for generations to come. This might mean creating certain incentive programs for encouraging new farmers to establish themselves in Comox and to produce food that can be consumed locally (or encourage cooperative farming).

- 4. In 2010, the region created a comprehensive [Sustainability Strategy](#). If elected, will you encourage the adoption of relevant 'food security actions' outlined in the strategy?**

There are a lot of food security actions outlined in the strategy and I will do my best to encourage their adoption. My vision would be that the Sustainability and Long Range Planning manager would champion a lot of the food security initiatives as they are related to sustainability of our Town and community of which we are part.

- 5. Would you support using municipal/regional lands and infrastructure to develop local food systems (e.g. farmers' markets, community gardens, land leasing, etc). If yes, what would be your first priority?**

Yes, my first priority will be to address the low-hanging fruit ;) Essentially I would like to dedicate public space to community gardening, which will benefit the population on a food consumption level, but also from a therapeutic point of view. There is never quite anything as grounding as having your hands in the ground. Secondly I would like to implement a policy that would encourage new construction landscaping to plant food-producing trees, such as fruit or nut trees, and have a certain percentage of plants being fruit-producing. Finally, ensuring our ALR lands remain ALR for generations to come, and leasing any surplus land for agricultural benefits.

- 6. What will you do to increase awareness of food insecurity and address related issues such as poverty and affordable housing?**

There are a lot of great local organizations that do a great job of this, and I will continue to support them and will meet with them to understand how to better raise such awareness.

- 7. Do you have any other comments related to food security you would like to share?**

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**CANDIDATE NAME: NICOLE MINIONS**

**Candidate Position: Councillor**

- 1. In the Comox Valley, we estimate that 1 in 5 people experience poverty and food insecurity. Healthy food and community food engagement have been shown to lead to significant long-term health and well-being outcomes, especially for children. If elected, what would you do to ensure all residents have access to healthy food? How will you support community-based food security programs?**

I am in full support of our local food security programs. As an elected official in the Town of Comox, I will encourage the promotion of programs such as the Comox Valley Food Bank, community gardens and school-based meals so that everyone has this basic right. On the other side of the education and promotion piece, I want to encourage more community members to be involved in donating nutritious and healthy food for these programs. The education and advocacy of food security is critical in our schools, business and overall community.

I grew up watching my parents volunteer at our local Food Bank as well as Meals on Wheels. Later working in different types of transition housing myself, I saw the importance of nutrition and the knowledge of where your next meal would come from. Today, I show my children how we grow food in our garden and I wish that all families had access to this experience.

- 2. A Vancouver Island Region Food Charter has been written and supported by food security organizations across Vancouver Island (these are funded by *Island Health*). It sets out a vision for a health-oriented, local and equitable food system. If elected, would you support the adoption of this Food Charter for your jurisdiction?**

Yes, I support the adoption of the Food Charter in the Town of Comox.

- 3. The development of progressive food security policy is important at all levels of government. If elected, would you support the development of a Municipal/Regional Food Policy Council? Would you advocate for local jurisdictions to work with other levels of government on food security issues? What food security issues do you see as being a priority for this region?**

If Courtenay, Cumberland and Areas A, B & C were willing to collaborate on a Regional Food Policy, it would make sense to share research and resources on creating this policy. If there was not a majority, I would support the discussion municipally with the Town of Comox Mayor and Councillors.

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The two biggest issues that I see in our region are:  
Approximately only 5% of our food comes from the Comox Valley  
1 in 5 people does not have food security

I see the real opportunity in changing these statistics to have more food grown locally and more adults and children having food security.

**4. In 2010, the region created a comprehensive [Sustainability Strategy](#). If elected, will you encourage the adoption of relevant 'food security actions' outlined in the strategy?**

I would be open to reviewing the "food security actions" as a Council and bringing forth the most viable actions in Comox based on land and resources.

**5. Would you support using municipal/regional lands and infrastructure to develop local food systems (e.g. farmers' markets, community gardens, land leasing, etc). If yes, what would be your first priority?**

Yes, I would support the development of local food systems. Our challenge is the lack of municipal lands the Town of Comox currently has available. However, we are rich in green (park) space currently. I love the idea of a Comox farmers market Downtown during the warmer months of Spring, Summer and Fall. It's a win-win for residents and local food and art-based businesses.

My priority would be to research the development of a community garden. As well as look at what other municipalities have done with urban growing. Many people are surprised that chickens are not allowed in almost all properties when moving here from larger cities that do allow this.

**6. What will you do to increase awareness of food insecurity and address related issues such as poverty and affordable housing?**

It's hard to address poverty due it's size and scope but where the Town of Comox Council can impact is in the area affordable housing and food security.

For affordable housing we can look at approaching available land in town and strategically partnering the owners with developers who will build multi-unit housing at a base cost level. For regular developments in town we can continue to ask for cash in lieu or land donations but add one more step in making a percentage of dwellings be in a rental pool. We can welcome organizations such as Habitat for Humanity and the Coalition to End Homelessness into Comox. Lastly, we can continue to approve buildings such as the new apartment building going in on Anderton Avenue by Seymour Developments.



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To increase awareness of food insecurity, we can continue to education our municipal politicians, MLA's, service organizations such as Rotary that do community work and projects. The current programs we have in the Comox Valley can be expanded and built upon. At this time, we could use a community garden (Comox) and better transit option to the Food Bank for Comox residents. Urban growing in town is something we can start a conversation on.

**7. Do you have any other comments related to food security you would like to share?**

I thank your organizations and organizations like yours across Vancouver Island and B.C. for the work that you do. Food, shelter and safety are basic human rights that everyone in our community should have access to 365 days a year. So, thank you for asking municipal candidates these important questions.



## LUSH VALLEY

**CANDIDATE NAME: DON DAVIS**

**Candidate Position: Councillor**

- 1. In the Comox Valley, we estimate that 1 in 5 people experience poverty and food insecurity. Healthy food and community food engagement have been shown to lead to significant long-term health and well-being outcomes, especially for children. If elected, what would you do to ensure all residents have access to healthy food? How will you support community-based food security programs?**

I will encourage council to help those affected by implementing tax relief for charitable organizations involved.

- 2. A Vancouver Island Region Food Charter has been written and supported by food security organizations across Vancouver Island (these are funded by *Island Health*). It sets out a vision for a health-oriented, local and equitable food system. If elected, would you support the adoption of this Food Charter for your jurisdiction?**

Yes

- 3. The development of progressive food security policy is important at all levels of government. If elected, would you support the development of a Municipal/Regional Food Policy Council? Would you advocate for local jurisdictions to work with other levels of government on food security issues? What food security issues do you see as being a priority for this region?**

Yes to first and second question. Good nutrition for school children is a high priority.

- 4. In 2010, the region created a comprehensive [Sustainability Strategy](#). If elected, will you encourage the adoption of relevant 'food security actions' outlined in the strategy?**

Yes



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- 5. Would you support using municipal/regional lands and infrastructure to develop local food systems (e.g. farmers' markets, community gardens, land leasing, etc). If yes, what would be your first priority?**

Yes. First priority would be Community gardens.

- 6. What will you do to increase awareness of food insecurity and address related issues such as poverty and affordable housing?**

If any relevant group brings ideas to Council, I will support ideas that provide solutions.

- 7. Do you have any other comments related to food security you would like to share?**

The problem is not lack of food. I grew up and lived in farming communities and saw more food left in the fields than was processed. As well marketing practices see too much food go to waste from stores. I will support organizations that work to change the system in any productive manner.



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**CANDIDATE NAME: RON FREEMAN**

**Candidate Position: Councillor**

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I would like to see more community gardens started and the processes to get them started streamlined.

I would also like to work in conjunction with the food bank and find agricultural land to lease and a local retired agriculturalist who would oversee the planting and harvesting of crops to supply the food bank with fresh produce. Volunteer labor would be needed and possibly using students as part of their work experience.

- 2. A Vancouver Island Region Food Charter has been written and supported by food security organizations across Vancouver Island (these are funded by *Island Health*). It sets out a vision for a health-oriented, local and equitable food system. If elected, would you support the adoption of this Food Charter for your jurisdiction?**

Yes

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- 6. What will you do to increase awareness of food insecurity and address related issues such as poverty and affordable housing?**
- 7. Do you have any other comments related to food security you would like to share?**

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