

PORT COQUITLAM

The Questions for Mayoral and City Council Candidates:

1. Protecting salmon-bearing streams

Recognizing the importance of salmon to British Columbia, what will you do to reduce or prevent pollution in our local salmon-bearing streams?

2. Protecting our natural assets

How will you protect our natural assets including forests, streams, wetlands, wildlife habitat and other ecosystems in the face of development pressure?

3. Connecting our communities with nature

What steps have you taken, and what steps will you take as a mayor/councillor, to ensure that our communities maintain a strong connection to nature?

4. Climate action and resilience

What **three policies** will you support or introduce to proactively prevent and pay for climate-related disasters while also reducing greenhouse-gas emissions?

RESPONSES FROM PORT COQUITLAM MAYORAL CANDIDATES:

FESENMAIER, Connor

1. Protecting salmon-bearing streams

I support strong protection of Port Coquitlam's salmon-bearing streams and the watersheds that feed them. The City should focus particularly on sources of pollution that municipal government can directly influence, including stormwater runoff, construction activity, illegal dumping and failures in drainage infrastructure.

I would support effective monitoring, enforcement where violations occur, and infrastructure improvements where municipal systems are contributing to water-quality problems. I also believe the City should continue working with streamkeepers, environmental organizations and other levels of government that possess specialized expertise.

2. Protecting our natural assets

Growth and environmental protection should not be treated as mutually exclusive, but development decisions must account for the long-term value of forests, wetlands, streams and wildlife habitat.

I support protecting environmentally sensitive areas, maintaining appropriate riparian protections, and requiring development to properly account for drainage, habitat and surrounding ecosystems. Where development affects natural assets, the City should clearly identify the environmental consequences and mitigation measures before decisions are made.

I also believe residents deserve transparency about those trade-offs. Environmental protection should be based on measurable outcomes, sound planning and long-term stewardship.

3. Connecting our communities with nature

Port Coquitlam already has an extraordinary natural advantage through our trail network, parks, waterways and access to green space. Protecting and improving those connections should remain a priority.

As Mayor, I would support maintaining and improving trails, parks and public access to natural areas while protecting the ecosystems that make those places valuable in the first place.

I also believe partnerships with community organizations, stewardship groups and educational initiatives can help residents understand and participate in caring for the natural environment around them.

4. Climate action and resilience

My approach would focus heavily on practical resilience.

Municipal government should prepare for the consequences of extreme weather through effective drainage and stormwater infrastructure, flood planning, wildfire preparedness where applicable, emergency planning, tree and canopy management, and infrastructure designed for changing environmental conditions.

I also support reasonable measures to reduce municipal greenhouse-gas emissions where they provide measurable environmental benefits and responsible value for taxpayers.

Climate policy should not be measured by the number of plans or declarations a government produces. It should be measured by whether infrastructure is more resilient, emissions are

actually reduced, natural systems are protected and residents receive value from the money being spent.

RESPONSES FROM PORT COQUITLAM COUNCIL CANDIDATES:

BECKER, Dawn

1. Protecting salmon-bearing streams

Increase my understanding of current activities and programs that are in place, as well as enforcement of rules and regulations by levels of government.

2. Protecting our natural assets

A balanced approach to development is important for many reasons. When considering a proposal for development, one should consider all aspects that may or will be affected.

3. Connecting our communities with nature

Port Coquitlam is in an envious position - we are surrounded by nature with three rivers as boundaries and the environments of Pitt River, Lake, Minnekhada and Widgeon Parks among others at our doorstep. Previous City Councils have had the foresight to ensure we have an abundance of city parks, trails and green spaces. The continued establishment of public green spaces should be a consideration for future development.

4. Climate action and resilience

What **three policies** will you support or introduce to proactively prevent and pay for climate-related disasters while also reducing greenhouse-gas emissions?

Other levels of government have issued bulletins on greenhouse gas emissions. The support of, or introductions of policies around climate action will be taken into consideration if or when those come forward.

ETUK, Solomon

Protecting salmon-bearing streams

Most of the pollution in our streams comes from runoff from our roads, parking lots and construction sites every time it rains. I'd support building rain gardens and bioswales into the streets and parking lots we rebuild, so runoff is dealt with before it reaches our creeks. We need deeper partnerships with the Hyde Creek Watershed Society and Kwikwetlem First Nation, who already do so much of the hands-on work. Politicians who sit on city council are not experts, but they can use every tool in their toolkit, together with the experience of the community we have right here, to tackle these challenges through partnerships.

Protecting our natural assets

Our forests, creeks and wetlands do the same work as our pipes, pumps and culverts. These natural assets should be in the city's asset management plan, so they get maintenance budgets alongside the infrastructure I mentioned. I would also support wider setbacks from creeks and rivers.

Connecting our communities with nature

One of my priorities is more transportation options in our city! On council, that means I would push to make it easy to reach nature within our city without a car. This means protected active transportation lanes and safe walking routes connecting neighbourhoods to our amazing trails and parks. My platform also includes free recreation for kids under 12; city programs can be run in partnership with watershed societies to give our kids a chance to explore our city's nature at no cost.

Climate action and resilience

1. Put natural assets in the city's asset management plan. Our trees, creeks and wetlands already do the work of pipes, pumps and culverts. Once they sit in the asset management plan, they get maintenance and replacement budgets like any other infrastructure. Paired with wider riparian setbacks, this reduces flood risk for a fraction of what engineered solutions cost, and a healthy canopy stores carbon while it cools our streets.

2. Implement our Climate Action Plan and hire dedicated environmental staff. PoCo already has a plan; we need staff to carry it out. Dedicated staff can find climate opportunities across every department and apply for the provincial and federal funding we're leaving on the table. That team can also build a registry of vulnerable residents who get checked on during heat and smoke events, something PoCo lacks compared to other municipalities in our region.
3. Give residents more transportation options. Getting around is where PoCo households spend the most and where we produce the most emissions. More frequent, reliable transit, bus signal priority on Shaughnessy and Wilson, and protected active transportation lanes take cars off our roads and cut household costs at the same time. It's climate policy residents feel in their monthly budget!

KARNIK, Mithila

1. Protecting salmon-bearing streams

I've walked my dog and biked all over Hyde Creek, DeBoville Slough and the Coquitlam River. My family has watched the coho come home at some spots here. What every resident needs to know is that every storm drain in this city eventually leads to a salmon-bearing stream. There needs to be awareness and education about the 2024 fish kill at the Hyde Creek Hatchery, traced back to pool chemicals entering the storm system. Pollution prevention is not just an environmental issue, it's a bylaw enforcement and public education file. I'd push for targeted outreach to property owners near our creeks about what never belongs in a storm drain with published results of the engagement and a commitment from residents, stronger enforcement on construction sites where silt and runoff are the biggest daily threat to water quality, a closer official working relationship between the city and groups like the Hyde Creek Watershed Society. These groups are already doing the monitoring work but my observation is that they don't have the resources or political backing they deserve. And where there's federal or provincial dollars on the table for habitat protection work, Port Coquitlam should be applying for them, not leaving that money for other municipalities to claim.

2. Protecting our natural assets

How will you protect our natural assets—including forests, streams, wetlands, wildlife habitat and other ecosystems—in the face of development pressure?

I'd want our development review process to treat streams, wetlands and wildlife habitat as fixed constraints any development project has to design around. They should not be construed as obstacles a project can negotiate away with the right consultant. That means empowering our own environmentalist groups and watershed groups with a real voice at the referral stage. Community engagement is key. Comment periods cannot open up after the plans are basically locked in, and it directly means council backing the groups and bylaws when a developer pushes back. Such issues cannot be portrayed as objections managed through delays.

3. Connecting our communities with nature

What steps have you taken, and what steps will you take as a councillor, to ensure that our communities maintain a strong connection to nature?

As a councillor, I'd want to be intentional about getting people outside and into shared civic spaces through not just environmental but cultural programming as well. Using my unique community infrastructure building skills, I'd push for this overlap - more programming that routes through Hyde Creek, the Coquitlam River trails and Minnekhada, multilingual signage and interpretation, First Nations awareness and education so newcomer families feel included in traditions and spaces; partnerships with the environmental groups and the watershed societies to run the kind of bear habitat awareness, salmon viewing and stewardship events that turn a walk in the park into an actual relationship with our waters and parks; partnerships also with heritage groups such as the museum to maximise community engagement through multiple touchpoints.

4. Climate action and resilience

What **three policies** will you support or introduce to proactively prevent and pay for climate-related disasters while also reducing greenhouse-gas emissions?

First: a canopy and stream retention bylaw with real enforcement: mature-tree and riparian protections - keeping what we have is cheaper and faster than replanting after the fact.

Second: Port Coquitlam already knows how to use the Community Emergency Preparedness Fund, it's secured CEPF grants for emergency support equipment and training. It hasn't touched CEPF's structural flood mitigation streams or the new Disaster Resilience and Innovation Funding program built for exactly this.

Third: Council can back environmental groups and watershed societies in the city with cost-share funding and letters of support so they can go after the BC Salmon Restoration and

Innovation Fund, and reserve the federal Disaster Mitigation and Adaptation Fund for the larger structural resilience projects it's actually built for.

McCURRACH, Nancy

1. Protecting salmon-bearing streams

I have been fortunate to serve as Port Coquitlam City Council's representative on the Coquitlam River Watershed Roundtable. Through this role, I have learned a great deal firsthand about our local salmon-bearing waterways, particularly Hyde Creek and the Coquitlam River. I have also had the opportunity to tour the Coquitlam River Dam and deepen my understanding of the watershed.

To help reduce stormwater runoff and prevent pollution from entering the Coquitlam River, I helped champion the creation of the demonstration rain garden in Lions Park. Rainwater flowing across roads, driveways and properties can collect oil, sediment, fertilizers, pesticides and other pollutants before entering storm drains and local streams. Rain gardens use plants and soil to slow, absorb and naturally filter this runoff, helping protect water quality and sensitive salmon habitat.

I also initiated Port Coquitlam's popular Rain Barrel Program. Rain barrels collect water from downspouts during rainfall, reducing the volume of water entering the storm-drain system and carrying pollutants into our waterways. Residents can use the stored water on their gardens, helping conserve treated water, reduce runoff and protect our local salmon-bearing streams.

2. Protecting our natural assets

Protecting Port Coquitlam's forests, streams, wetlands and wildlife habitat must be part of how we plan for growth. The City is installing two new fish-friendly pump stations, and our bylaws include protections for mature trees during property development. At a recent Committee of Council meeting, I commended staff for applying those protections to a proposed subdivision.

We have also seen firsthand how development on Burke Mountain, above Port Coquitlam's North Side, can affect neighbouring communities and wildlife. Increased bear activity is one example. I would like to see more education and outreach to help residents secure their garbage and food waste, along with practical options for building secure storage sheds. Reducing food attractants helps keep both residents and bears safer.

As development continues, I will support careful planning that protects mature trees, waterways and wildlife habitat, and addresses impacts on surrounding neighbourhoods before they become bigger problems.

3. Connecting our communities with nature

A strong connection to nature starts with opportunities for residents to enjoy and care for the green spaces and waterways around them. At our September 22 Council meeting, I encouraged residents to take part in the Coquitlam River Watershed Society's BC Rivers Day event at Lions Park. Activities such as the river cleanup, rain garden tours and information booths give people practical ways to learn about and help protect our local watershed.

I have also advocated for public participation in the City's upcoming tree planting program. I helped connect City staff with a grant opportunity that brought in \$78,000 for tree planting, to be matched with City funds. I will continue to support opportunities for residents to take part in planting and caring for trees.

I will also keep advocating for green boulevards and more pollinator gardens. These spaces bring nature into our neighbourhoods and give residents of all ages a chance to connect with it close to home.

4. Climate action and resilience

I will support three practical policies to reduce emissions and protect Port Coquitlam from the growing costs of extreme weather:

1. **Protect mature trees and expand our tree canopy.** I will support stronger tree retention during development and a funded planting and maintenance program, with priority given to neighbourhoods that have less shade and face greater heat risk. Trees absorb carbon, cool our streets and help manage heavy rainfall. I will continue to pursue grants and support a clear annual budget for planting and caring for trees.
2. **Invest in flood prevention and green stormwater infrastructure.** I will support a long-term plan to upgrade drainage and flood protection while adding rain gardens and other natural ways to absorb rainfall. These investments can reduce damage before a flood happens and support healthier streams. I will work to secure senior-government grants and ensure that eligible infrastructure needed for growth is funded through development cost charges.

3. **Make buildings cleaner and more resilient to heat.** I will support a clear path toward stronger emissions standards for new buildings, while helping residents access available programs to improve the efficiency and cooling of existing homes. Energy-efficient buildings produce fewer emissions, and measures such as heat pumps can help keep people safer during heat waves. I will seek outside funding for City facilities and use planned upgrades as opportunities to reduce operating costs over time.

NEILSEN, Darin

1. Protecting salmon-bearing streams

I would support stronger follow-through on preventing construction sediment and polluted runoff from entering our streams. That means making sure inspections are happening, problems are corrected promptly and there are consequences when requirements are ignored.

Coquitlam has expanded real-time monitoring and treatment controls for runoff from major development sites. I would like Port Coquitlam to examine whether that approach would improve protection here, particularly for construction near sensitive waterways.

We should also look for opportunities to capture and filter road runoff before it reaches our streams. Vancouver uses rain gardens and other planted drainage areas as part of its Rain City Strategy. Incorporating suitable measures when we rebuild streets or parking areas would be a practical place to start. We would also need to budget for their upkeep.

I would want local streamkeepers and Kwikwetlem First Nation involved in identifying priorities. Working with neighbouring cities is important too, because what happens upstream affects us here.

2. Protecting our natural assets

I support more housing choices, but protecting environmentally sensitive areas needs to be part of the discussion from the beginning. We should identify the streams, wetlands, significant trees and wildlife corridors that need protection before development plans are too far along.

I would support retaining healthy mature trees wherever possible, protecting vegetation along our waterways and keeping natural areas connected. Planting replacement trees is important, but we should not pretend a newly planted tree immediately replaces what a mature tree provides.

We also need to look at the overall effect of development. The loss of a few trees or a small natural area on one property might seem minor, but repeated across a neighbourhood, those losses add up.

Gibsons takes an approach worth learning from. It recognizes ponds and creeks as assets that provide drainage services the municipality would otherwise have to pay to replace. I support considering that value when we make land-use and budget decisions in Port Coquitlam.

3. Connecting our communities with nature

My advocacy has included accessible parks, recreation opportunities, and safer sidewalks and crossings. Those things help people get out into their community and enjoy what is around them. Protecting our trails, rivers and trees is also part of the priorities I have put forward in this campaign.

As a councillor, I would continue advocating for safe walking connections to parks and trails, along with benches, shade and suitable access for people with mobility challenges. A senior who needs somewhere to rest or a parent pushing a stroller should be able to enjoy these spaces too.

I would support working with schools and local stewardship groups on stream cleanups, native planting and nature education. The City can help with equipment, modest funding and staff support so volunteers have what they need.

We also have to respect the places we are enjoying. Keeping dogs under control, staying out of sensitive habitat and addressing damage to natural areas are part of that.

4. Climate action and resilience

I would support these three policies, building on Port Coquitlam's existing Climate Action Plan:

First, make flood prevention and natural protection part of our regular infrastructure budget.

We need to keep drainage and flood-protection infrastructure maintained and prioritize upgrades where the risk is greatest. Alongside that, I would support protecting wetlands, restoring streambanks and using rain gardens where they will work. Retaining and planting trees would also help provide shade and store carbon.

Where possible, I would combine this work with planned road and utility improvements so we are making good use of money already being spent.

Second, make homes and public buildings better prepared for extreme heat while reducing energy use and emissions.

I would support practical improvements such as insulation, heat pumps and shade, and help residents find available rebates. Affordability needs to be considered, particularly for seniors and people on limited incomes.

For City buildings, we should plan energy improvements around equipment replacement wherever practical. We also need reliable public places where residents can get relief from dangerous heat and wildfire smoke.

Third, plan and set money aside before disaster strikes.

I would support a clearly identified reserve for climate preparedness and recovery, building on existing City reserves where appropriate. Contributions should be planned through the budget, with provincial and federal funding pursued to help with larger projects.

Major City projects should also be assessed for future flood and heat risks, their emissions and their long-term operating costs. Where energy upgrades produce verified savings, I would support putting some of those savings toward further improvements.

Residents deserve to know what this work costs and what it achieves. I would want clear annual reporting on completed projects, spending and results. We cannot prevent every disaster, but we can prepare more carefully and reduce the harm and costs when one occurs.

POLLOCK, Glenn

I think we've demonstrated concern for the natural environment and will continue to do so. It's difficult as Port Coquitlam is a largely built out 28 square kilometre City. We do protect our salmon bearing streams but, in many cases we're trying to daylight and uncover watercourses that were buried or moved through development when little to no regard was given.

We have what I understand is the most stringent tree protection bylaw in the Lower Mainland. If you combine that with our aggressive tree planting program it should get us well on the way to achieving our 30% canopy target.

I think a healthy tree canopy can help mitigate the effects of climate change. We're spending millions on pump stations to lessen the effects of atmospheric rivers.

SHERWOOD, Julie

1. Protecting salmon-bearing streams

Our salmon-bearing streams are an important part of Port Coquitlam. I want to see them protected for future generations. I would support stronger monitoring of pollution, better protection during construction, and working to keep pollutants out of our waterways. I believe we can continue to grow while also being responsible guardians of our streams and the salmon that depend on them.

2. Protecting our natural assets

I believe we can grow Port Coquitlam while still protecting the forests and streams, wetlands and wildlife that we are known for. I would support responsible development that considers the long-term impact on our natural environment and protects important habitat. Once these natural assets are lost, we can't easily get them back.

3. Connecting our communities with nature

I believe being connected to nature is an important part of a healthy community. I enjoy our parks and trails and want to make sure they remain accessible and welcoming to everyone. As a councillor, I would support protecting our natural areas while creating more opportunities for residents and families to enjoy and appreciate the outdoors. We should all strive for a number of outdoor steps a day whatever our personal goal is.

4. Climate action and resilience

I would focus on improving stormwater and drainage infrastructure to reduce flooding, protecting trees and green spaces to help manage heat and rainfall, and supporting energy-efficient buildings and cleaner transportation to reduce emissions. I believe climate action should be practical and affordable protecting Port Coquitlam residents today while preparing for the future.

THOMPSON, Dehara

1. Protecting salmon-bearing streams

Salmon aren't abstract to me. I grew up near Stoney Creek and went to Stoney Creek Elementary, where every year we raised salmon fry in our classroom for the Great Salmon Send Off. Watching those fry make their way into the creek each spring taught me, as a kid, exactly how fragile that cycle is and how much it depends on what happens upstream.

Here in PoCo, the Coquitlam River carries that same significance. Its name in həŋqəmɪnəṃ, the language of the kwikwəzəm First Nation, reflects a sockeye run that shaped this land long before the city existed. Protecting that watershed means enforcing real riparian setbacks on new development, ensuring stormwater management is a genuine requirement, not an afterthought, in every project near the river, and holding the line on erosion and runoff controls during construction. As a councillor, I'd push for the OCP refresh to treat our waterways as infrastructure worth protecting, not just a scenic backdrop to growth.

2. Protecting our natural assets

Development pressure and environmental protection don't have to be in conflict, but they only stay in balance if a city plans for both at the same time, not sequentially. My approach to growth in PoCo has always been that density should happen at a pace matched to what our infrastructure, and our ecosystems, can actually absorb. That means smart density near transit and the West Coast Express corridor, rather than pushing development into our forests, wetlands, and remaining green space.

I've spent time in cities around the world through my soccer career, and I've seen firsthand what it looks like when a city grows without protecting what made it worth living in in the first place. I don't want that for PoCo. I'd support stronger tree retention bylaws, protection for wetlands and wildlife corridors in our planning documents, and real consequences, not just fines but restoration requirements, for developers who damage protected natural areas.

3. Connecting our communities with nature

This has been part of my life since childhood, not something I've come to recently. The Great Salmon Send Off taught me that kids build a real, lasting relationship with nature when they're given hands-on responsibility for it, not just a nature walk once a year. I've carried that belief into my work in sport and community building, where green space and outdoor access have always been part of how I think about healthy neighbourhoods.

As a councillor, I'd want to see school and community partnerships like salmon enhancement programs expanded and properly resourced, not left to rely entirely on volunteer effort. I'd also push for our parks and trail network, especially along the Coquitlam River, to be treated as core community infrastructure in the OCP refresh, not an amenity that gets deprioritized when budgets tighten.

4. Climate action and resilience

Three policies I'd support or introduce:

First, building flood protection and climate resilience directly into the OCP refresh. PoCo is surrounded by the Coquitlam River, Fraser River and Pitt River, and our growth planning has to account for flood risk and climate resilience from the outset.

Second, transit-oriented density as climate policy, not just housing policy. Every resident who can live near the West Coast Express corridor and rely on transit instead of a car is a real, ongoing reduction in emissions. I see density done right as one of the most effective climate tools a city has.

Third, pursuing federal and provincial climate resilience grants aggressively, rather than funding infrastructure upgrades solely through property tax increases. Programs exist at senior levels of government specifically for municipal climate adaptation, and PoCo should be applying for every one we qualify for, so protecting this city from climate impacts doesn't fall entirely on homeowners.