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It is my privilege to represent my community on the Board of Education for School District #79. I address this matter as a trustee but as you can appreciate I do not under any circumstances represent the board. I would like to speak firmly in support of the proposed amendment to bylaw 3074 in area 'E' which will create the conditions for keeping our public lands for our public needs.

This amendment will benefit the people of this community, will broaden expectations from our governing bodies for wisdom and leadership and will set the stage for the awareness that our school board must also carry out an overhaul of those policies in our district that direct the sale of school district property particularly in this time of cuts and closure. Presently there is no process to consult with our communities about the disposition of school property in school district policy but it is the CVRD that is providing some trail blazing that will encourage us to change our approach.

School boards and all local governments must recognise and acknowledge in their practices, a reverence for the fate of lands and buildings that have been turned over to public needs and nurtured for generations by community contribution. It is no accident that many public buildings and institutions are located on prime pieces of property. This is not a tragic waste as is so often stated but rather a reflection of the regard and trusting value previous generations placed on our neighbourhoods and their needs.

If the principles enshrined in this amendment were now established in school district policy our neighbours would not be reduced to fighting off one misguided attempt after another to grab public assets - development can take place on land already in the private realm. Standing up for the reasonable protection of lands long since given to everyone and nurtured by everyone's taxes does not restrict the growth of our community. But – the loss of these properties will change forever the quality of our lives and the choices we can make.

The rush to sell is feeding the compulsion to close our schools; the school closures provide the supply of public lands to auction away. If closure is the appetiser then sale is the main course. Before we close our schools we should examine the real motivation behind these decisions and stand up to this global liquidation of our public resources.

These properties are our birthright – their value is beyond estimation. The short term thinking that is indifferent to our long term needs must be swept away. All elected authorities need to examine the will of the people they represent and the emerging sensibilities in our communities that are the driver behind these thoughtful changes - changes that not only reflect authentic progress but necessity.

Our forbearers envisioned a place where their worldly possessions could be the agents of social objective. Rather than argue and conspire against the wisdom that they displayed we now can honour their endowments and advance those glorious sentiments.

All our citizens have an inherent right to be heard and to have their will reflected in the outcomes of land use particularly those lands that we all hold in common. This amendment speaks to great changes in our understanding of what it means to care for community.

Thank you for listening.

Eden Haythornthwaite

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