



John Horgan MLA Juan de Fuca

Community Report

MARCH 2014

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The second session of the 40th Parliament. It's about time.

After a 200 day hiatus, the second session of the 40th Parliament is finally under way. After last year's meager 36 sitting days, it's certainly about time.

On returning to the Legislature, one of the BC Liberal Government's first orders of business was to change the timing of Question Period. The ultimate accountability session in the Legislature will now take place on Tuesday and Thursday mornings at 10am instead of in the afternoon. After seven months of inaction, the single change to our outdated governance system the BC Liberal Government could come up with was a proposal that would allow government members to get out of town early on Thursdays. You would think that a newly elected government would try to elevate the public's perception of our Legislature by proposing real reforms.

Absent any ideas from the government, my colleagues and I have been working on our own parliamentary reform – a Private Member's Bill which would call for changes to insist on fall sessions of the Legislature.

Like other democracies, we have a sitting calendar that sets out when we meet and for how long. But our current calendar is subject to the Premier of the day deciding whether or not we actually sit. Our paltry 36 days of parliamentary work is a sad joke, the fewest days in the whole country. My Bill will make it mandatory to sit in the fall to do the people's business.

On February 11th, the Premier, as is custom each year after the Speech from the Throne, listed off the various MLA appointments to legislative select standing committees. In theory, these committees meet on important matters such as education, finance, health, crown corporations and children and youth, to name a few, and are intended to provide a means for MLAs from both sides of the House to work together to tackle the challenges we were elected to address. The reality is that many of these committees don't actually sit and haven't for many years. It's not like there has been a lack of issues to review. But again, the committees only meet

if the government wants them to.

Rather than accept the status quo, I have tabled a Bill, The Select Standing Committee Reform Act, that will create a parliamentary system that is more accountable and effective. We will be calling on government to increase the scope and mandate of legislative committees by allowing them to consider matters on their own initiative and also ensure that they meet all year round. Should these government restrictions lessen, we can and will do meaningful work on these committees.

The BC Liberal government also announced the 2014/15 provincial budget last week. Finance Minister Michael de Jong has claimed that BC has a balanced budget with a razor thin surplus. The books are not closed on the last budget until April, and the Auditor General will not certify them until July. That has not stopped the stream of rhetoric we hear at each and every budget announcement. While the

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Community Office

WEST SHORE OFFICE
Monday-Friday
10am-4pm

NEW LOCATION
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Follow John on
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COMMUNITY EVENTS

Mar 1 Step by Step, Staying Active & Safe. This 6 months study for seniors to better health is looking for volunteers in Sooke, aged 70 and older, to take part in a study on effectiveness of group medical visits in promoting health and physical activity in older adults. The first set of volunteers needs to be signed up and screened by Mar 11, but there will also be a second intake. Increase your activity, make new friends and contribute to needed research and knowledge. Free. Info: [CLICK HERE](#).

Mar 8 Highlands Folk Coffee House featuring Bowker Creek. Doors open at 7pm, 'open mike', then entertainment at 7:30pm. \$5 (or what you can afford), includes a coffee or tea, and goodies. Caleb Pike House, 1589 Millstream Rd. Info: [CLICK HERE](#).

Mar 8 Appetite for Art. Food and art fundraiser benefitting the Sooke Food Bank and Sooke Fine Arts Youth Art Scholarship. Art work and free hors d'oeuvres. Gallery open 7 to 10pm by donation, or Purchaser's Preview at 6pm when you buy a 3 course dinner for \$35 (by reservation). Prestige Oceanfront Resort. Info: 778-425-2529.

Mar 12 Awareness Film Night Annual Farming & Gardening Gala. Co-sponsored by Sooke Food CHI. Farm Stewardship is the theme, with 3 short films, post-screening discussion with farmers featured in one of the films and members of the Sooke Farmland Trust. Door prizes, info on farming and gardening, tea and goodies by EMCS culinary arts students and local produce and products for sale. 7 to 9:30pm, Edward Milne Community School, 6128 Sooke Rd. By donation. Info: www.awarenessfilmmight.ca.

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Parliament *from page 1*

Premier campaigned on a platform of making BC debt free, she has raised the provincial debt faster than any Premier in our history. Another \$7 billion of debt will be added to our province's debt load, making it climb to \$69 billion by 2016. Real and deferred debt at BC Hydro will mean annual rate increases and more costs dumped on beleaguered taxpayers.

When the Finance Minister speaks of fiscal discipline and tough choices what does this really mean for British Columbians? Well, we'll be expected to pay an average of nearly \$900 more over the next three years just for hydro and medical

services premium increases. This on top of rising costs of tuition, car insurance and ferry fares.

Once again British Columbians are being forced to pay more to get less. With record numbers of seniors, students and children having to resort to food banks to eat, I'm not sure how much more they'll be able to take. Know that I will not only continue to fight on your behalf, but also work to bring strategies forward to government that will try to make life easier for British Columbians.

*John Horgan, MLA Juan de Fuca
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Bipolar Society Starts Support Group on the West Shore

Organized by Andrea Paquette, Executive Director of the Bipolar Disorder Society of BC, this support group is for people of all ages who have bipolar disorder to meet, talk, help one another and share in a safe environment.

Healthy choices will be a focus, with members discussing lifestyles, drug and alcohol issues and other

facets of living with mental illness. The group is off to a great start with laughter, positive energy and new friendships being forged.

Please let Andrea know ahead of time if you're interested in attending (babe@bipolarbabe.com). The group meets Tuesdays, 7 to 8:30pm, at Centennial Centre, 2805 Carlow Road.



Humble pie indeed!

When the Shamrocks Senior 'A' Lacrosse team was in the playoffs for the Mann Cup last fall, John made a bet with Jordan Bateman, BC Director of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, that the Shamrocks would win against Jordan's Langley team.

Well, the Shamrocks won that day so on February 5th, Jordan settled his outstanding debt and took John to lunch. Paul German, Executive Director of the Shamrocks, kindly presented John with his own personalized Shamrocks jersey plus a spare for Jordan to wear.

Jordan was presented with a lunch menu consisting of items like Cajun Crow Soup, Wild Langford Crow with Shamrock glaze, and humble pie!

Jordan was a great sport and the Shamrocks got some much deserved attention at the legislature!

TOP LEFT: Paul German presents John with a personalized jersey. Special thanks to the Shamrocks for making this lunch extra special!

LOWER LEFT: John and Jordan Bateman at the Legislature proudly sporting Shamrocks jerseys!

COMMUNITY EVENTS

Do you have an upcoming community event?

Send full event information to John.Horgan.MLA@leg.bc.ca and we'll do our best to fit it in!

Mar 12 Ha-bat-itat. Guided walk at Mill Hill Regional Park with a park naturalist, who will help dispel fear and misinformation about these fascinating flying mammals. 1 to 2:30pm, meet at the kiosk in the parking lot off Atkins Rd. Info: [CLICK HERE](#).

Mar 22 & 23 Strife and Harmony. Presented by the Sooke Philharmonic Chamber Players & Chorus. Mar 22 at Sooke Baptist Church, 7110 West Coast Rd, 7:30 pm. Mar 23 at New St. Mary's Church, 4125 Metchosin Rd, 2:30pm. Adults \$18, Students and Seniors \$15, under 15 are \$5. Info: [CLICK HERE](#).

Mar 22 Salmon Saturday. Join a CRD Regional Park's naturalist and check out the demonstration hatchery and displays. Drop in event for all ages, 11am to 2pm, Charters Interpretive Centre, 2895 Sooke River Rd. Contact: 250-478-3344

Mar 28 Community Services Auction. Need help with spring chores? Local businesses donate items and services that are auctioned off to benefit the Metchosin Community Association. There will be pre-event online bidding followed by both a silent and live auction on the 28th. 7 to 9 pm, Metchosin Community House. Info under 'Events' at <http://metchosincommunityhouse.com/>