

Debbie Schulz

From: Andrina Iliffe
Sent: September 23, 2020 8:28 PM
To: Cheryl Hardisty; Info E-Box
Subject: What has the Christie Mountain Fire taught us?

Greetings,

Please forward this email to every elected representative at city hall and the regional district. Thank you.

I have been mulling over the above question for the past few weeks, and have arrived at only one answer: that it is plain foolishness to build housing into the hills that surround us. Wildfires, which thanks to climate change, are more frequent every decade, cost every tax payer in the province big dollars. Think of the saving to BC taxpayers if Heritage Hills had never been developed as a housing estate. Yes, some fire-fighting capability would have been required, but not the hundreds of fire fighters nor the hundreds of hours they worked tackling a blaze in very difficult terrain trying to save peoples' homes. Now think about how those saved taxpayer dollars could have been spent: health care, long term care and education come quickly to mind, so does developing clean energy, and retrofitting old buildings to make them energy efficient. In other words, investing in people and communities.

Why do I write this? Because the city and the regional district have been presented with plans for building housing estates in our surrounding hills; one development on Spiller's Road next door to the Campbell Mountain landfill, and another at the other end of town, next door to the Skaha Bluffs park. The developers have no doubt pressed upon you the extra tax dollars that will flow to the city and the regional district once the housing is built. But consider what is lost that is priceless, and that it will be lost forever. And then consider what it will cost the taxpayer to fight wildfires in those areas in 10, 15 and 20 years.

What did we learn from the flooding in 2017 and 2018? Surely we learned not to build on the floodplain? And yet Sickle Point is up for sale, rezoned for five houses. It's a small area when compared to the whole valley, but it is a vital area to the plants, insects, birds, and other wildlife that call it home. It is a wetland that was recognised for its importance to the environment well over a century ago. I urge you all to work with those who are raising funds to buy this land and then return this area to its natural state.

Please do not be persuaded by developers who dangle dollar signs in front of you. Think forward 20 and 30 years down the road, just as the council of the day did when Skaha Park was first created. Traffic was rerouted, pedestrians and cyclists were welcomed, and today it is still the best area in town to walk, play and picnic, no matter one's age or physical ability.

When we know better we must do better. We cannot be swayed by money. There is far more to consider than the money a housing development might bring to the community.

Sincerely
Andrina Calvert