

First-time candidate calls for ‘mandatory cost recovery’ to clean up Metchosin finances

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Ellen Frisch is seeking a seat on Metchosin's council in October's Local General Election. (Courtney Hett)

A first-time council hopeful says Metchosin needs to stop ignoring regional pressures and apply a businesslike lens to its finances.

Ellen Frisch is seeking a seat on Metchosin council in October's municipal election. After 24 years of calling the district her safe haven, the former policy worker says the community is facing significant land use and financial challenges.

"I feel like people are asleep at the switch," Frisch said.

Frisch immigrated to Canada from Washington State in 1991, having previously worked in corporate managed health care in the United States.

In B.C., she worked on early treaty negotiations, including to help finalize the Tsawwassen First Nation Treaty before moving into energy policy and stakeholder engagement.

That career history fostered a passion for analyzing complex systems, a mindset she says she is now bringing to local governance.

When she is not analyzing policy, Frisch says she applies that same systems mindset to her hobbies. She treats her garden as a canvas for painting and took up beekeeping during the pandemic, an interest she said raised her awareness about regional pesticide use.

“I’m analyzing things always,” Frisch said. “Well, why did this happen? Why did that happen? What could have been done? What could have been done better and how do we need to change it going forward?”

Addressing what she describes as Metchosin’s “dire” financial situation is her top priority. Frisch contends taxes have been kept artificially low by failing to save for long term infrastructure maintenance.

To fix the shortfall, she says the district must evaluate operational spending, including legal fees, and diversify its income base.

“A mere \$100,000 shift in expenses triggers a three per cent tax increase, which is fundamentally outrageous,” Frisch said.

She wants to mandate cost recovery forecasting across municipal departments, turn recreational facilities into profit generators, and explore environmentally sensitive light industrial zoning in clustered areas.

“Appropriate fiscal management for the long term health of the Metchosin community itself and our citizens is fundamentally what I’m running on,” she said.

Housing and land use also drive her campaign.

Frisch said she and members of the grassroots Metchosin Hometown Initiatives Collaborative spent two years working with the municipality on modernizing housing bylaws that were implemented in January.

While many residents hold a strict no change mantra, Frisch maintains that regional growth has already arrived on local properties.

“The issue is, the changes here, change is upon us, and we need to catch up with what that change is forcing on us,” she said.

Frisch wants council to clarify zoning definitions to manage unpermitted campgrounds and trailer storage, while pushing the Union of BC Municipalities to address provincial regulatory gaps around tiny homes and RV living.

“We keep putting our heads in the sand,” she said of provincial and municipal responses to non-traditional housing.