

## Matthews, Rayanne

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**Subject:** FW: 2024 Property Tax Exemption

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**From:** Pride Society Comox Valley <[pscv2021@gmail.com](mailto:pscv2021@gmail.com)>

**Sent:** Thursday, October 12, 2023 9:42:13 PM

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**Subject:** 2024 Property Tax Exemption

Dear Mayor Wells and Courtenay Councillors,

Pride Society of the Comox Valley extends its deep appreciation to you and City staff for your rapid response to recent anti-LGBTQIA2S+ events in Courtenay. Your strong support of citizens who have been systematically excluded historically is clear and firm.

Pride Comox Valley is aware that charitable and nonprofit organizations who own property in the City, or property owners who rent to them, are eligible for Permissive Property Tax Exemptions. This is a wonderful systemic support that the City offers.

Pride understands that the final decision on these Permissive Property Tax Exemptions for 2024 is imminent. It has come to the attention of our Board that the City may be granting a Permissive Property Tax Exemption for 2024 to an organization that was recently involved in leading an anti-LGBTQIA2S+ protest locally, seeking to suppress transgender identity in schools. Our Board strongly encourages Council to reconsider granting exemptions to any organization, regardless of their charitable activity, which also advocates for the denial of human rights to equity-seeking groups. This would be consistent with the City of Courtenay's stated mission to "...promote educational opportunities and diversity, and care about the health and well being and safety of our citizens, businesses and environment."

Discriminatory practices by religious organizations should not be allowed because of their claim to freedom of religion. While people of faith are guaranteed the right to believe and worship as they wish without interference from the state, their religious freedom does not supersede the law of the land with respect to the promotion of hate and discrimination against marginalized groups. The Canadian Civil Liberties Association says,

"Religious freedom in Canada means that there are no state-sponsored religions and that the government cannot prefer some religious beliefs or groups over others. Similarly, religious belief cannot be preferred to non-belief. We strive to ensure that any restrictions on freedom of religion are necessary and minimally intrusive and that our public institutions treat all individuals equally, regardless of religious affiliation." (<https://ccla.org/our-work/fundamental-freedoms/freedom-of-religion/>)

The Pride Society of the Comox Valley would appreciate a follow up with a council representative on this issue. If the exemption for 2024 is granted, Pride will immediately begin work on encouraging, and supporting, the City to create criteria for future years that prohibit organizations that cause harm to LGBTQIA2S+ people from receiving Permissive Property Tax Exemptions.

In Pride,

Christopher Bate

Chairperson

***Pride Society of the Comox Valley***

***<https://pridesocietycomoxvalley.org/>***



***Pride Society Comox Valley respectfully acknowledges that it operates on the stolen traditional territory of the Pentlatch, E'iksan, Satsila, and Sahtloot people, now collectively known as the K'omoks First Nation. Pride Comox Valley honours the presence and power of the K'omoks Nation and thanks them for their grace and tolerance.***