

Philip Perras

Pender Island, BC

Dear Mayor and Council,

On April 1st, ten South Island municipalities—Colwood, Duncan, Ladysmith, Langford, Metchosin, North Cowichan, North Saanich, Sidney, Sooke, and View Royal—took a courageous and unified stand by refusing to fund E-Comm under the current unfair arrangement imposed by the province. I thank and applaud them for taking this action in order to protect their constituents. This act of civil disobedience was not reckless—it was necessary, principled, and done on behalf of every municipality in this province.

These ten municipalities are not simply reacting to unfair funding — they are reacting to the collapse of accountability. E-Comm is supposed to be an independent public service, yet it operates without transparency, oversight, or effective municipal representation. Now, an “independent review” is being promised—ironically, to review an organization that was, again, already supposed to be independent. If that doesn’t demonstrate a systemic failure of accountability, what does?

The ten municipalities have refused to fund E-Comm not just because the costs are unjustly distributed, but because the structure itself is unacceptable. Reform must come first. Without it, municipalities are being asked to prop up a failing governance model with taxpayer dollars and political silence. Now, all municipalities in British Columbia must be prepared to stand behind them.

What we’re seeing across BC is not isolated. It is a growing pattern: the slow death of independent oversight.

E-Comm is only one example. After the 2024 election, the province approved multi-year BC Hydro rate hikes — but not through the independent BC Utilities Commission. That’s the regulator tasked with protecting the public interest, and it was simply overridden by the NDP cabinet. The rate increases disproportionately impact seniors and low-income residents — and the public never had a chance to weigh in.

This was not an isolated incident. It’s part of a broader trend of provincial power grabs, where oversight is being sidelined, local governance is being strong-armed, and public services have become tools of control rather than accountability.

I believe that the introduction of Bill 7 cemented this concern. Introduced in March 2025, just months after the NDP narrowly retained power, the bill sought to grant cabinet sweeping emergency powers — bypassing the legislature entirely. Even after Section 4 was reportedly withdrawn, the underlying goal

remains: consolidate power quietly, away from public view, and bypass local voices.

Meanwhile, the institutions we rely on are becoming symbols of isolation and avoidance.

Consider BC Hydro once again. Could it somehow be another example of the province exploiting crises to consolidate power? For one thing, their Victoria district office is "earthquake resistant" — but on closer inspection, it is also accountability resistant. Locked doors during business hours (according to google reviews). No benches. No bulletin board. No ledges of any kind. Nothing inviting whatsoever. Instead, they placed a "mailbox" for complaints that looks like it will literally shock anybody who comes near it.

This is the public-facing symbol of what governance has become in British Columbia — uninviting customer service, locked lobbies, and backroom decision-making resistant to accountability.

These ten municipalities have refused to fund dysfunction, and every municipality in BC should be ready to take action to support them. Not with outrage. Not with noise. But with unity, on behalf of their constituents.

If retaliation comes — whether in the form of withheld grants, political pressure, or punitive treatment — then perhaps municipalities across the province should consider delaying their power bill payments to BC Hydro for one billing cycle.

Not a refusal — a reflection. A pause. A symbolic outage to mirror the real outage: the blackout of democratic accountability in this province.

Because when E-Comm isn't independent, when the BCUC is overridden, when public services lock the doors on the public, and when Bill 7 threatens the very role of the legislature, especially at a time when the government barely got elected at all — municipalities are the last source of accountability left.

Support the ten. Prepare to stand together. And if the province insists on flexing power against the communities it serves, then let us remind them — we still have the power to respond.

Respectfully,

Philip Perras

Concerned Resident of British Columbia