



Farewell

as another chapter in
Richmond's story comes
to a close after 26 years



It's been quite a journey—from humble beginnings to becoming one of Richmond's best-known attractions. For 26 years, the Richmond Night Market welcomed visitors from around the world, earned international recognition, including in The New York Times and became the launching pad for thousands of young entrepreneurs and family businesses. Most people remember it as a place for great food, entertainment, and an inexpensive fun night out, but its impact reached much further. For countless small businesses, the Night Market offered an affordable opportunity to introduce new products, build a customer base and learn the realities of running a business. Many have since gone on to establish successful restaurants, food brands, retail stores and other thriving enterprises. As one chapter closes, its legacy will continue through the businesses it helped inspire and the memories created for millions of visitors.

From all of us at *The Richmond Sentinel*, thank you, Raymond Cheung. This is your legacy.

OUR CITY

Richmond



BY ISABELLA RODRIGUES

April 24 – September 20

Richmond Night Market

8351 River Rd, Richmond, BC

Fri & Sat 7:00pm - 12:00am
Sun & Stat Holiday 7:00pm - 11:00pm

This summer, millions of fans and visitors from around the globe will fill the city with excitement — and the Richmond Night Market will be the place where everyone comes together to eat, laugh, and feel the energy!



Courtesy Richmond Night Market

August 15

Garlic Festival

2631 Westminster Hwy, Richmond, BC
10:00am - 3:00pm



Courtesy cityofrichmondparks

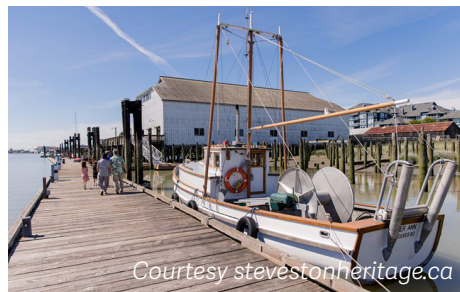
Come to the Garlic festival and experience farm tours and fresh-grown produce, to live music and a cool kids' zone. Beyond the food trucks and vendor stands, this annual grassroots celebration of all-things-garlicky is your big chance to try new things like garlic ice cream!

August 22 – 23

Maritime Festival

5180 Westwater Dr, Richmond, BC
11:00am - 6:00pm

Come to the 23rd annual Richmond Maritime Festival in the Britannia Shipyards National Historic Site, celebrating the city's maritime heritage with entertainment, displays, food trucks, and activities for all ages. Tour the docks to see a collection of West Coast boats and explore the historic site along the Steveston waterfront.



Courtesy stevestonheritage.ca

July – September

Seniors Activities, Guides & Passes – Summer 2026

In-person and online



Courtesy City of Richmond

The City and partners are proud to offer high-quality social programs and services for adults aged 55+ at eight community facilities, including the Seniors Centre at the Minoru Centre for Active Living. Register in person at any community facility, call 604-276-4300, or online at richmond.ca/parks-recreation/about/senior

October 17

Municipal Elections

In two months time on October the 17th there will be a general Election for Richmond. To learn more about your eligibility, candidates, mail in ballots and more please go online to richmond.ca/city-hall/elections or stay tuned to the Richmond Sentinel for more.



Courtesy Tripadvisor

May 5 – December 22

Kwantlen Farmers' Market

Richmond Public Library – Brighthouse
100-7700 Minoru Gate, Richmond, BC

Every Tuesday 11:00am - 4:00pm



Courtesy bcfarmersmarketrail.com

Come by this vibrant farmers market hosted by the students of Kwantlen Polytechnic University! Spend the day enjoying live music, delicious local food, fresh produce, handmade goods, and an amazing community atmosphere. It's the perfect place to support student entrepreneurs and local vendors.

Richmond Night Market Announces Final Season After 26 Remarkable Years



Richmond, BC—After 26 unforgettable years, the Richmond Night Market has announced that the 2026 season will be its final year of operation at its current location, marking the end of one of North America's largest night markets and one of British Columbia's most iconic summer attractions.

Since its beginning, the Richmond Night Market has grown from a local community event into a destination recognized across Canada and around the world, welcoming millions of visitors while celebrating the diversity, culture, food, and entrepreneurial spirit that makes Richmond so unique.

"As the owner, I have had the privilege of organizing and operating the Richmond Night Market for the past 26 years," said Raymond Cheung, Founder of the Richmond Night Market. "It has been one of the most rewarding and enjoyable journeys of my life. Watching a single local event grow into one of Canada's best-known summer attractions has been an incredible honour."

The decision comes as the market's lease has come to an end, bringing this chapter of the Richmond Night Market to a close.

"Although it is heartbreaking to say goodbye, I am filled with gratitude rather than regret," Cheung said. "The memories we have created together over the past 26 years will continue to live on in the hearts of our visitors, vendors, performers, and everyone who has been part of this amazing journey."

Over more than two decades, the Richmond Night Market has become much more than a place to enjoy great food and entertainment. It has provided opportunities for thousands of small businesses, introduced countless entrepreneurs to new customers, created jobs for generations of young people, and brought families and friends together to celebrate summer year after year.

"We would like to express our deepest gratitude to the public for your unwavering support

over the past 26 years. Your enthusiasm, loyalty, and love for the Richmond Night Market made this event what it is today."

"We also want to extend our heartfelt thanks to every vendor, sponsor, performer, community partner, and especially our dedicated staff. Their hard work, passion, and commitment have been the foundation of our success. Without them, none of this would have been possible."

As the Richmond Night Market prepares for its final season, everyone is invited to visit once more to celebrate the memories, traditions, and experiences that have made the event a beloved part of summers in British Columbia.

While this chapter is coming to an end, the spirit of the Richmond Night Market—and the friendships, stories, and memories created over the last 26 years—will live on for generations to come.

Thank you for 26 incredible years. It has truly been our honour to be a part of your summers.

Minister's statement on August 2026 rental report B.C. rents drop consistently over two years

Summary

- On Thursday, Aug. 6, 2026, Rentals.ca released a new report, which shows average asking rents decreased by 4.5% overall and 4.1% for purpose-built rentals and apartments in British Columbia
- B.C. had five cities in the top 15 cities with the largest year-over-year decreases in purpose-built rental rent: Abbotsford (-12.4%), Langley (-7.6%), Coquitlam (-7.3%), New Westminster (-6.6%) and Richmond (-6.1%)



Hon. Christine Boyle

Minister of Housing and Municipal Affairs



Hon. David Eby

Premier of B.C.

Christine Boyle, Minister of Housing and Municipal Affairs, has issued the following statement:

"This report marks 25 months of consecutive year-over-year decreases in asking rent prices. That means we've seen more than two years of falling asking rents as we continue our work to make life more affordable for renters.

"We know that prices need to be more affordable, and seeing asking rents are down 11.9%

from their August 2023 peak is encouraging news. It takes more than just luck or national trends to hit a two-year-long streak. It is proof that our policies, such as the speculation and vacancy tax and working with communities to build more affordable rental housing, are helping everyday people get ahead.

"Last month, Premier David Eby secured a multi-billion-dollar agreement with Prime Minister Mark Carney that sets British Columbia on a generational path to prosperity, unlocking jobs for workers and support for vital public services and infrastructure. As industries and investors 'Look West' to B.C. more than ever, families and young people want to 'live West' in a home they own. Many people have a good career and can afford a mortgage, but unjust tariffs and the rising cost of living can put saving for a down payment

out of reach. That's why the Province is working with the federal government to help British Columbians put down roots and rent to own a home.

"Our continued streak lowering rent prices is proof that good policy can make a real impact. We are taking the time needed to make our made-in-B.C. solution for homeownership as successful as our rental efforts. We look forward to sharing the details of our plan in the coming months.

"As we build a path to homeownership for thousands of people, we haven't stopped building more affordable rental homes in communities throughout the province. In the past month, we've opened new homes in the Sunshine Coast, Coquitlam, Penticton and Chilliwack. Making housing more affordable is just one part of our promise to make sure everyone is welcome and can build a good life in British Columbia."

English Corner – Richmond man teaches free english sessions to over 9,000 students

BY LAUREN LUONG

Masih Sabet teaching conversational English for free to new members of the community



English Corner is an informal conversational English Program offered as a free community service. It provides newcomers with opportunities to practice speaking English, build meaningful friendships, and discover ways to contribute to their local communities. Once a week, participants gather at a variety of locations to discuss meaningful topics with the guidance of volunteer facilitators. The welcoming environment is intentionally designed to encourage friendship, foster a sense of belonging, and strengthen communication skills. English corner members believe that the ability to effectively communicate thoughts and feelings is a crucial part of building a successful life in a new country.

Unlike traditional classroom instruction, English Corner allows participants to practice English through authentic, real-life conversations. Rather than focusing primarily on grammar exercises or written assignments, participants build confidence by speaking naturally with others in a relaxed and supportive environment. This conversational approach helps newcomers become more comfortable communicating in everyday situations, such as shopping, attending medical appointments, speaking with neighbours or preparing for job interviews. Over time, these regular interactions reduce the fear of making mistakes and encourage participants to use English more confidently in their daily lives. By combining language practice with genuine social interaction, English Corner helps newcomers develop both their communication skills and their sense of belonging within the community.

English Corner is supported by the Colibri Learning Foundation, a not-for-profit developmental organization dedicated to unlocking

the potential of immigrants in Canada. The foundation supports newcomers and temporary residents as they engage in community building by facilitating community-based activities, programs, and processes that promote communication, encourage dialogue between diverse groups, and inspire local initiatives for social development.

The origins of English Corner date back about a decade, when a small group of individuals who had recently immigrated to Canada became aware of social challenges many newcomers faced. They observed that many immigrants lacked opportunities to practice English, often resulting in isolation, loneliness and a disconnection from community life. Motivated to address these challenges, they began a learning process that ultimately led to the creation of English Corner.

English Corner was developed to foster genuine friendships while helping newcomers overcome the social barriers that can exist between immigrants and Canadian-born residents. Those involved in its development designed a simple yet effective model centred around four key elements: volunteer facilitators, a welcoming environment, participants, and a weekly conversation topic. Each week they discuss a meaningful theme, often related to community life, that includes quotes and discussion questions that encourage thoughtful conversation.

An equally important aspect of English Corner is the encouraged community-building activities outside of weekly meetings. These informal gatherings strengthen relationships and create lasting connections beyond the typical classroom setting. From the beginning, the program avoided over-dependence on physical

resources or rigid organizational structures. Instead, it was designed to be adaptable and flexible so that any willing facilitator with a learning mindset could establish one within their own community. Its simplicity is enticing to volunteers which will encourage them to serve others, while its positive impact in creating meaningful friendships allowed English Corner to spread naturally throughout different communities.

English Corner currently operates at multiple locations throughout Vancouver including Richmond, with each location meeting once every week. As the number of English Corners continued to grow, a wide variety of community initiatives began to emerge. In response, the Colibri Learning Foundation was established to provide organizational support, assist volunteers in developing new initiatives, and facilitate an ongoing learning process that would help these programs become increasingly effective and sustainable.

The Role of English Corner has become even more significant in recent years as the Government of Canada has reduced federal funding for intermediate and advanced newcomer language training.

One particularly vibrant English Corner meets every Tuesday and Saturday at Mino Club Café in Richmond, BC, under the guidance of Masih Sabet. The café has become a welcoming place where people from dozens of different countries gather to practice English, exchange experiences, and build lasting friendships. Since its establishment, the program has welcomed nearly 9,000 participants, many of whom have described English Corner as the first true community they found after arriving in Canada. Contact: masihsabet@yahoo.com

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Google Play Store.

Police will never ask for your PIN or credit card: Richmond RCMP warns public about impersonation phone scam

Richmond RCMP is warning the public about an increase in reports of scammers posing as police officers to get bank and credit card information.

In one recent file, a resident received a call from an unknown woman claiming to be a police officer and provided their credit card information, resulting in fraudulent transactions totalling more than \$1,000. These scammers use caller ID spoofing, so the call often appears to come from a real police phone number. During the calls, victims are told that someone is trying to defraud them and that police need their card information to prevent further fraudulent activity.

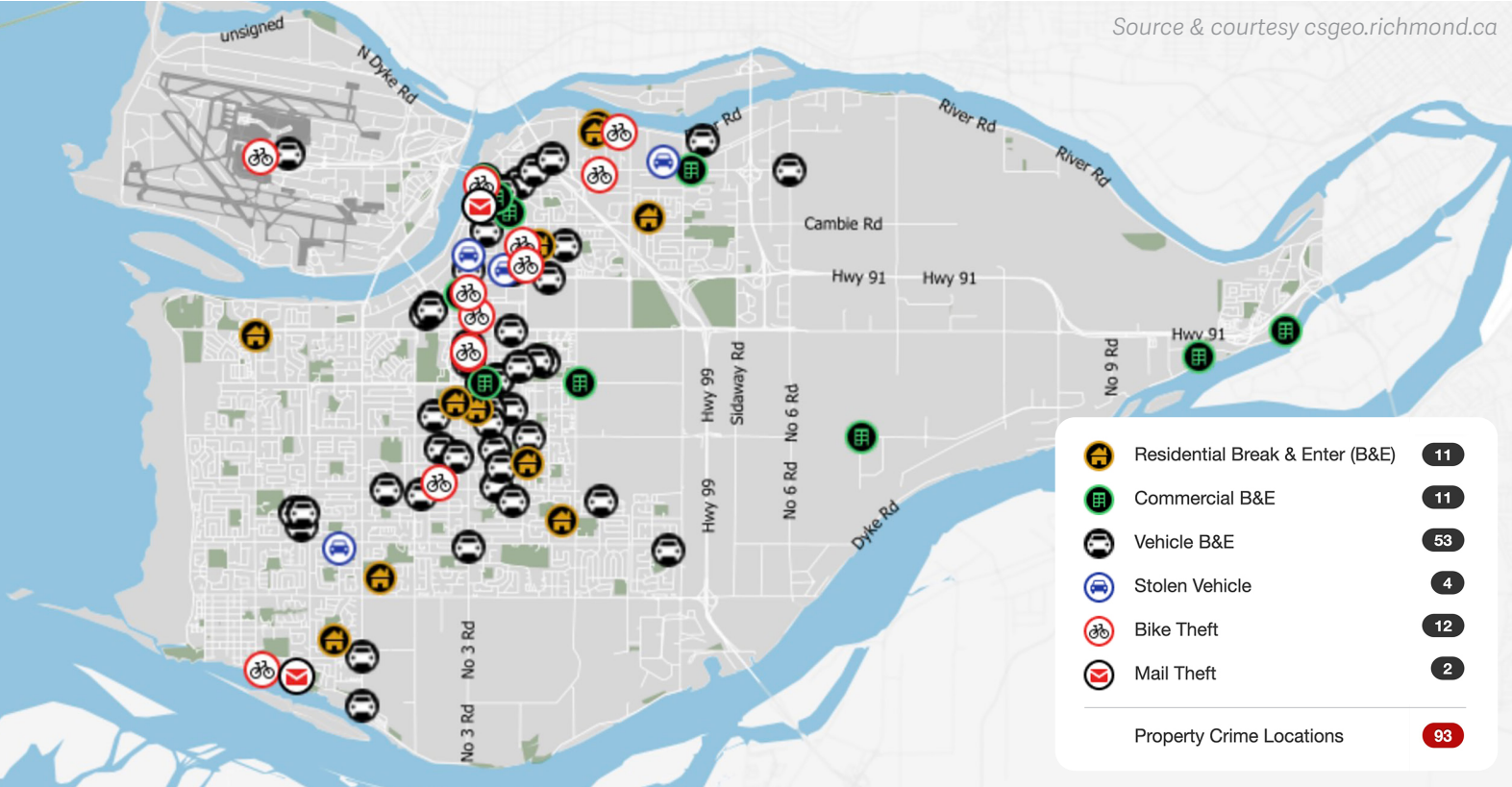
“Police will never ask for your credit card information, banking details, or PIN over the phone, for any reason,” said Corporal Eddie Chow of the Richmond RCMP. “If an agency calls you and asks

you for financial information, hang up. You can always call back on a number you look up yourself. That check costs nothing and it stops the scam.”

Richmond RCMP reminds residents:

- Treat any unexpected call asking for card, banking, or PIN details as a scam, even if the number looks legitimate. Caller ID can be faked.
- Verify before you act. Hang up and call back on a number you look up yourself. Do not trust the number given to you or that you see on display or on call records.
- Speak with a trusted friend or family member before you share anything.

- Pass it on. The more people who know how these calls work, the fewer of them succeed.
 - If you’ve already shared your information:
 - Call your bank or credit card provider right away. They can stop transactions, reverse charges, and replace your card.
 - Report it to your police of jurisdiction.
 - Report it to the Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre at 1-888-495-8501 or antifraudcentre.ca.
- These scams can target anyone. Talking about them with the people around you is the best protection.



VINE GROUP MORTGAGE BROKERAGE



**Jolene
George**

Sr. Mortgage Broker

July, 2026

Mortgage Market Update

As we move through the second half of 2026, the Bank of Canada has once again chosen to hold its policy interest rate at 2.25%. This marks the sixth consecutive rate announcement with no change, reinforcing the Bank's cautious approach as it continues to monitor inflation, economic growth, employment, and global events.



AI Generated

Although many Canadians were hoping for greater certainty around future rate movements, this latest announcement reminds us that today's mortgage decisions shouldn't be based on trying to predict the next rate change. Instead, they should be based on your individual financial goals, your current mortgage structure, and the opportunities available today.

Bank of Canada Rates

While Canada's economy has shown encouraging signs of improvement, including modest GDP growth and a stronger labour market, inflation remains above the Bank's long-term target. Ongoing geopolitical tensions and fluc-

tuations in energy prices continue to create uncertainty, meaning the Bank of Canada is likely to remain patient and data-driven before making any significant policy changes.

For homeowners, this stable rate environment is actually providing something we haven't seen in several years-time. Instead of feeling pressured to react quickly to rising rates, homeowners now have the opportunity to step back, review their mortgage strategy, and determine whether their current financing still aligns with their long-term financial objectives.

Reviewing Your Mortgage

One of the biggest misconceptions I see is that the best time to review a mortgage is when it comes up for renewal. In reality, many of the best opportunities happen months before maturity. Most lenders begin reaching out three to six months before your renewal date, and unfortunately, many homeowners simply accept the first offer presented to them.

In fact, studies consistently show that approximately 80-90% of borrowers stay with their existing lender without comparing alternatives. While that may seem like the easiest option, it doesn't necessarily mean it's the most beneficial.

A mortgage review isn't just about finding a lower interest rate. It's about making sure your mortgage continues to support your changing financial circumstances. For some homeowners, that may mean restructuring their mortgage to improve monthly cash flow. Lower payments can create additional flexibility in the household budget and reduce financial stress.

Consolidating Credit

For others, refinancing may provide an opportunity to consolidate higher-interest debt. Credit cards, unsecured lines of credit, and personal loans often carry significantly higher interest rates than mortgage financing. Consolidating that debt into a well-structured mortgage can improve cash flow while simplifying monthly payments.

An Ideal Time To Evaluate

This current environment is also an ideal time to evaluate whether an early renewal or refinance makes sense. Since rates have stabilized, homeowners have more time to compare lenders, products, and mortgage features before making an important financial decision. Waiting until the last minute often limits your options.

Another important takeaway from this month's announcement is the value of flexibility. The future path of interest rates remains uncertain, and no one—including economists—can predict with certainty what will happen over the coming year. That's why building a mortgage

strategy around flexibility, rather than speculation, often produces better long-term results.

Every homeowner's situation is different. Factors such as income, future plans, debt levels, family goals, investment objectives, and home equity all play an important role in determining the right mortgage strategy. What works for one borrower may not be the best solution for another. That's why I encourage clients to focus less on trying to time the market and more on understanding the opportunities available to them today.

If you're curious whether your mortgage could be working harder for you, the process starts with a simple review. By looking at your current mortgage balance, maturity date, monthly payment, interest rate, and existing lender, we can determine whether there are opportunities to improve your overall financial position. Sometimes the result is significant monthly savings. Other times it's better cash flow, greater flexibility, or access to equity that can be used strategically for renovations, investments, debt consolidation, or future purchases.

Explore Your Options Early

Looking ahead, forecasts from Canada's major financial institutions continue to vary. Some banks anticipate policy rates remaining unchanged well into 2027, while others expect gradual increases as inflation continues to evolve. The differing forecasts themselves reinforce an important point: no one knows exactly what interest rates will do next.

Rather than making decisions based on predictions, homeowners are generally better served by developing a strategy that works under multiple economic scenarios.

Don't wait until your lender sends you a renewal notice. Start the conversation early. Explore your options. Compare what's available. Understand your choices before you're required to make a decision. A mortgage is one of the largest financial commitments most Canadians will ever have. Small adjustments today can create meaningful financial benefits over the life of your mortgage.

The current rate provides an excellent opportunity to be proactive rather than reactive. Whether your goal is reducing monthly payments, accessing equity, consolidating debt, or simply ensuring you're in the right mortgage product, taking the time to review your options now could make a meaningful difference. As always, I'm here to help you navigate the changing mortgage landscape and build a financing strategy that's designed around your goals—not just today's interest rates.

Contact: jolene@vinegroup.ca



The Cost of the Cloud: What Data Centers Do to Our Environment

BY MICHAEL COOPER

Every time you stream a show, do a Google search, or ask AI a question, that request doesn't just disappear into thin air. It travels to a data center, basically a giant warehouse full of computers that run 24/7 to store and process our digital lives. You've probably never seen a data center, but there's a good chance one is closer than you think: British Columbia is in the middle of a data center boom right now, and it's raising real questions about power, water, and our environment.

Why This Matters

You might assume data centers are a problem for other places like Virginia, Beijing, and Silicon Valley. But B.C. is actively welcoming this industry. BC Hydro and the provincial government just launched a new program to allocate up to 400 megawatts of electricity, enough to power around 350,000 homes for AI and data center projects over the next two years. Companies are lining up for it. Bell Canada alone has announced plans for six new AI data centers in the province.

Why here? B.C.'s hydroelectric power is clean and (relatively) abundant, and land and tech talent are available. That's the pitch. But it also means our province is now wrestling with the same tradeoffs playing out globally: how much power should go to computers instead of homes and other industries, and at what environmental cost?

Electricity

Data centers are power-hungry. Globally, the amount of electricity these facilities use is expected to roughly double by 2030, largely because of artificial intelligence. To put that in perspective: one estimate found that a single AI chatbot request can use nearly ten times more electricity than a regular Google search.

In some places, this is already reshaping the local power grid. In the U.S. state of Virginia, data centers use a quarter of all electricity used in

the state. In Ireland, it's over a fifth. That's the scenario B.C. is trying to get ahead of with its new "competitive process," essentially making data center companies bid for a limited, capped amount of power instead of just plugging in wherever they want.

Water

Here's something most people don't realize: data centers need a lot of water, not just electricity. All those servers generate heat, and the most common way to cool them down is with water-based cooling systems, like a giant liquid air conditioner.

In the U.S. alone, data centers directly used about 17 billion gallons of water in 2023 just for cooling, and that number could nearly quadruple by 2028. A single large data center can use up to 5 million gallons of water a day, which is roughly what a town of 10,000 to 50,000 people would use. Although the water is evaporated and returns to natural cycles, drawing these large amounts of water puts intense strain on supply grids.

Companies like Google and Meta have started publishing some of their numbers, and they're shocking: Google's global data centers used about 6 billion gallons of water in a single year, up sharply from a few years earlier. And that's before counting the water used at the power plants that generate a data center's electricity in the first place, which is often the larger chunk of the total.

What About Carbon Emissions and Climate Change?

Right now, data centers are responsible for a small but fast-growing slice of the world's greenhouse gas emissions, around 0.5% of the global total. That sounds small, but the trend line is steep. A 2026 industry study found that data centers may have emitted over 300 million tons of CO₂ in 2025, more than 50% higher than earlier official estimates, mainly because AI's growth caught forecasters off guard.

Where that power comes from matters a lot. Electricity from a coal-heavy grid produces way more emissions than electricity from a hydro-heavy grid like ours in B.C. That's actually one reason B.C. is seen as an attractive, "cleaner" location for data centers compared to places that burn a lot of coal or gas for power though clean power is still a limited resource, and every megawatt sent to a data center is a megawatt not available for something else.

It's Not Just Energy and Water

- **Backup diesel generators.** Most data centers keep large diesel generators on standby in case the power goes out, which adds local air pollution on top of everything else.
- **E-waste.** Servers typically get replaced every three to five years to keep up with newer, faster technology, creating a steady stream of electronic waste, releasing hazardous materials if not recycled properly.
- **Noise.** Constant humming from cooling fans and generators has become a real source of neighbourhood complaints in communities near large data center campuses.
- **Land & Infrastructure.** Big "hyperscale" data centers can span the size of several football fields and often require entirely new electrical substations or transmission lines to support them.

Is Anything Being Done About It?

Yes, and B.C.'s approach is a decent example. Rather than letting data centers connect to the grid on a first-come, first-served basis, the province set a hard cap and is making companies compete for power based partly on community and environmental benefits, not just who applies first. B.C. also permanently banned new grid connections for cryptocurrency mining, freeing up more clean power for the public.

Globally, the tech industry is also investing in newer cooling technology that uses far less water; some newer systems cut water use by 70-90% compared to older designs, along with more efficient chips and renewable energy purchases to offset growing demand.

The Bottom Line for Richmond and B.C. Readers

Data centers aren't going away; if anything, the AI boom means more are coming, and some may end up near us. They bring jobs and investment, but they also come with real environmental tradeoffs: more strain on the power grid, big water demands, and rising emissions tied to a technology most of us use every day without thinking twice about it. As B.C. moves forward with its new rules for allocating power to this industry, how well those tradeoffs get managed will shape not just our electricity bills, but our water systems and climate goals for years to come.

Minister's statement on arrival of wildfire personnel from Mexico



Hon. Ravi Parmar

Minister of Forests

Hon Ravi Parmar, Minister of Forests, has issued the following statement in response to the arrival of wildfire personnel from Mexico:

"Supporting our neighbours and communities, showing hospitality to our partners and taking care of each other. These are the values that make me proud to be a British Columbian.

"In our time of need, I am honoured to welcome more than 100 wildfire personnel from Mexico on Monday, Aug. 3, 2026, with more than 200 arriving later in the week. They've travelled from their homes to help us protect ours amidst a challenging wildfire season. As British Columbians, let's welcome them warmly as they prepare to work alongside our BC Wildfire Service crews.



"Wildfire response is built on teamwork. Whether support comes from within B.C., across Canada or around the world, every person who joins the effort strengthens our response capacity and helps ensure resources are available when and where they are needed most.

"I'm proud of the wildland firefighters from Canada and Mexico who are not thinking about borders but are answering the call, as we do when our neighbours need us.

"This B.C. Day, I want to thank our wildland firefighters here at home and around the world who are protecting our communities, our forests and our homes."

BC's future doctors start classes at SFU, the first new medical school in BC in nearly 60 years



Hon. David Eby

Premier of B.C.

Summary

- On Wednesday, Aug. 5, 2026, the first cohort of medical students will begin their orientation at the new SFU Stephens Family School of Medicine in Surrey
- The three-year, year-round curriculum will allow students to graduate one year sooner than traditional programs
- Students will begin their medical education in an interim learning space; the permanent location expected to be completed in 2030

People throughout the province are one step closer to strengthened community and primary care access, as the new Simon Fraser University (SFU) Stephens Family School of Medicine welcomes its first cohort of future doctors.

"Like many places, B.C. is facing a shortage of doctors. But our plan is making a difference – connecting thousands of people to a family doctor or nurse practitioner every week and

helping B.C. lead the country in doctors per person," said Premier David Eby. "The long-term solution is to train more doctors here at home. The students starting at the SFU Stephens Family School of Medicine today will care for families through some of life's happiest and hardest moments. We need to keep building on the progress we're making to ensure care is there for you when and where you need it." On Wednesday, Aug. 5, 2026, the cohort of 48 medical students have their first day of orientation in the school of medicine's interim learning space.

A curriculum for community

The new students will complete a curriculum designed to advance primary care and train doctors to provide team-based, person-centred care to serve diverse communities throughout B.C.

The three-year program will deliver a comprehensive medical education through a year-round curriculum, including summer studies. Students will graduate one year quicker than many other medical schools so they can deliver care sooner.

Students will graduate with a doctor of medicine degree, and start their residencies as early as 2029. While the focus of the curriculum is community and primary care, students will be well equipped to pursue residencies across the full range of specializations.

"We're taking action to train more doctors right here at home, so British Columbians can get the care they need, when and where they need it," said Jessie Sunner, Minister of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills. "I want to congratulate the inaugural class of medical students as they begin their journey

to becoming doctors. SFU Stephens Family School of Medicine, and the students committed to receiving their medical education and serving the community, will strengthen the entire health-care system, improving access to primary care throughout B.C."

While 48 medical students make up the inaugural 2026 class, the student cohorts will increase in phases, reaching a steady state of 120 students a year by 2035.

Research, innovation and partnerships to transform health care

Improving access to community and primary care in B.C. requires more than just training more doctors. It also means changing how the health-care system works. That's why medical students at the SFU school of medicine will help drive that system change through:

- Participation in research
- Community partnerships
- Partnerships with Indigenous communities

"I am incredibly excited to join the SFU Stephens Family School of Medicine this August," said Jasper Delichte, a student. "I was drawn to the program's commitment to advancing health equity through community-embedded medicine, which aligns with the kind of physician I aspire to become. I hope to build my career in a community health centre, providing trauma-informed and culturally safe care, while advocating for equitable access to health care across British Columbia."

To date, government has also committed \$41.1 million in ongoing annual operational funding.

This school of medicine is part of B.C.'s plan to hire, recruit and train more family doctors and deliver community and primary care to people throughout B.C. quicker. The school is one of many generational investments that government is working to deliver to support communities throughout the province for years to come.

2026 Richmond Election

On Saturday, October 17, 2026, eligible voters in Richmond will be electing one Mayor, eight Councillors and seven Richmond School Board Trustees. Those elected in 2026 will serve in office for four years.

Candidate Nominations

Nomination documents and candidate information packages for the office of Mayor, Councillor and School Trustee are now available at richmond.ca/elections, and at City Hall. Please contact the Richmond Elections Office for more information.

The Candidate Nomination period begins on Tuesday, September 1 at 9:00am and ends on Friday, September 11, 2026 at 4:00pm.

The Chief Election Officer will be receiving candidate nominations at City Hall only during the nomination period. To file your nomination, candidates are required to make an appointment. Candidates are strongly encouraged to submit their nomination documents in person at City Hall (by appointment), so documents can be reviewed to avoid delays. While nomination documents can be submitted by mail or email, these submissions must be complete to be accepted.

Campaign Financing Expense limits during the campaign period (September 19, 2026 to October 17, 2026) for the 2026 Richmond Election are:

For	Expense Limit
Mayoral Candidates	\$176,230.55
Councillor Candidates	\$88,947.13
Trustee Candidates	\$90,197.13

The third party directed advertising

expense limits for Richmond are:

Mayor and Councillor	
Candidates	\$8,811.53
Trustee Candidates	\$5,557.85

Please contact Elections BC for information about expense limits and other campaign financing rules by calling 1-800-661-8683.

Register to vote

Are you ready to vote? Find out:

- If you are eligible to vote
- If you are already registered to vote (use the **Am I on the Voters List?** search tool on the Election website)
- How to register to vote
- How to update your name and/or residential address
- How to contact the Richmond Elections Office

Advance voter registration with Elections BC ends Tuesday, August 18, 2026. However, please don't worry if you're not registered in advance. If you are an eligible voter, you can also register when you vote.

Inspect the Voters List

The City of Richmond uses the Province of BC's Voters List for Elections. The Voters List will be available for public inspection at City Hall starting on Tuesday, September 1 at 8:15am until Saturday, October 17, 2026 at 8:00pm. You are required to make an appointment if you intend to inspect

the Voters List. You must sign a statement that you will only inspect the list for the purposes of the election.

For personal privacy purposes, you have the right to request that your name and/or address be omitted from or obscured on the Voters List. Please contact the Richmond Elections Office to make an appointment to complete this request by Tuesday, August 25, at 5:00pm.

You can only object to the registration of a person on the Voters List if the person is deceased, or not qualified to vote in Richmond. To make an objection, please contact the Richmond Elections Office to make an appointment. Objections must be made by 4:00pm on September 11.

Richmond Elections Office

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23rd Richmond Maritime Festival

BY MICHAEL COOPER

Richmond, British Columbia, is set to host its 23rd annual Richmond Maritime Festival on August 22nd and 23rd, 2026, from 11:00 AM to 6:00 PM, at the historic Britannia Shipyards. This beloved free event promises a vibrant weekend of cultural performances, captivating displays, interactive activities, and fascinating demonstrations, all celebrating the city's deep-rooted connection to the sea and its rich multicultural history.

The festival offers a unique opportunity to explore a collection of beautifully restored wooden boats and maritime vessels docked along the waterfront, bringing to life the era when Steveston was a bustling hub of the West Coast fishing industry. Beyond the visual spectacle of maritime craft, visitors can enjoy live music across multiple stages, engage in family-friendly activities, discover local artists and artisans, and sample delicious offerings from various food vendors.

The Festival will include food trucks, previous events hosted Caza Persian Grill, Cheez2, CultivATE, D-Original Sausage Haus, Golden Bannock, Japadog, Japan Rice Bowl Association, Lemon Heaven, Little Mexico Cantina, Mango Yummy, Martha's Kettle Corn, Rolled West Coast, Slothfuls, Stackers, Lucky Churros, Coffee Box, and Tornado Truck.

The location of the festival, Britannia Shipyards, is itself a testament to Steveston's profound maritime past. Originally built as the Britannia Cannery in 1889, it stands as a preserved piece of "Cannery Row," the stretch of the Fraser River waterfront that, at its peak, housed more than 20 canneries. These industrial giants, like the famous Gulf of Georgia Cannery dubbed the "Monster Cannery," transformed Steveston into the "Salmon Capital of the World" and a booming town that attracted a seasonal population of up to 10,000 people.

The canneries of Steveston were a vibrant mix of cultures, albeit one often marked by rigid hierarchies and challenging conditions. Each canning season saw a massive influx of workers from various backgrounds, including First Peoples, and immigrants from China, Japan, and Europe.

First Nations communities, with their ancestral knowledge of the Fraser River's abundant salmon runs, were integral to the early fishing industry. Indigenous men often fished for the canning companies, while Indigenous women were employed inside the canneries. Many First Nations groups from along the BC coast and Vancouver Island would migrate to the Fraser River area during the sockeye fishing season, often as entire house groups, living in seasonal housing provided by the canneries. This participation, however, occurred within the harsh backdrop of colonial impacts that significantly disrupted traditional ways of life and forced First Nations peoples to seek employment within new industries.

Chinese immigrants played a crucial, though often undervalued, role in the canneries. By the 1890s, they constituted the majority of cannery workers, primarily in the grueling butchering crews where they were responsible for cleaning and slicing the salmon. Chinese laborers were typically hired through a "Chinese contract system," where a bilingual

contractor would negotiate wages, room, and board for his crews. Conditions in the bunkhouses were often bare and cramped, with dozens of workers sleeping in close quarters. Despite facing discrimination and being paid a fraction of the wages of Anglo-Canadian workers, Chinese immigrants formed tight-knit communities, with their own China towns emerging along the waterfront, complete with stores and services.

Japanese immigrants also formed a significant part of Steveston's workforce, with many settling permanently in the town. By the 1930s, the Japanese community in Steveston numbered around 3,500, making up a substantial portion of the population. Japanese men were highly valued for their fishing and boat-building skills, often building the wooden gillnetters used in the fishery. Japanese women, too, worked in the canneries, sometimes with babies strapped to their backs. The canneries actively sought Japanese employment, building bunkhouses for fishermen and later houses for their families. The deep roots of the Japanese community in Steveston were tragically severed during World War II with the forced internment and displacement of Japanese Canadians in 1942, leading to the loss of much of their property and the dismantling of their community.

The 2026 Richmond Maritime Festival is more than just a weekend of fun; it's an immersive experience that pays homage to Steveston's extraordinary history. By showcasing the meticulously preserved Britannia Shipyards, inviting historic vessels, and featuring cultural performances that reflect the diverse heritage of its workers, the festival helps to ensure that the stories of all those who shaped Steveston's maritime legacy are remembered and celebrated. A powerful reminder of how the convergence of nature's bounty, human ingenuity, and the hard work of people from around the world forged a unique and enduring community on the shores of the Fraser River.

Photo courtesy City of Richmond

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Aerobic Exercise and Why It Is Important

BY LAUREN LUONG



Being physically active is a crucial part of maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Exercise provides numerous benefits for both the body and the mind, yet its positive effects are often underestimated. The Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology (CSEP) recommends that adults complete at least 150 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous intensity physical activity every week. However, only 46% of Canadian adults meet this recommendation (CSEP Guidelines).

Exercise has many benefits: reduced risk of premature mortality, decreased symptoms of depression, improved mobility, better sleep quality, enhanced disease prevention, and improved cognitive function.

Although the terms are often used interchangeably, exercise and physical activity are not the same thing. Physical activity refers to any movement that requires energy expenditure, such as standing, walking, or doing household chores. Exercise, on the other hand, is structured, planned, and repetitive physical activity performed with the goal of improving or maintaining physical fitness. In other words, all exercise is physical activity, but not all physical activity is exercise.

There are several different types of exercise, each serving a unique purpose depending on a person's goals and needs. Aerobic exercise, or cardiovascular exercise, focuses on improving the efficiency of the heart and lungs. Common examples include running, swimming, and cycling. Strength training is designed to increase muscle size and strength through hypertrophy, with exercises such as push-ups, squats, and weightlifting. Balance training helps improve stability and reduce the risk of falls, with exercises like single-leg stands, heel-to-toe walking, and heel raises. Finally, flexibility training helps lengthen muscles and improve joint range of motion through activities like yoga, dynamic stretching, and the splits.

This exercise program focuses on aerobic exercise because of its numerous health benefits. Aerobic training improves cardiovascular endurance by increasing your maximum oxygen uptake (VO_{2max}), allowing your body to use oxygen more effectively during physical activity.

It also increases your cardiovascular efficiency. Maximum heart rate (HR_{max}) is a common way to prescribe exercise intensity. Aerobic exercise is ideal for improving endurance, and it can easily be combined with other forms of exercise, such as flexibility or balance training, to create a well-rounded fitness program.

When designing an exercise program, it is helpful to follow the FITT-VP principle, which stands for frequency, intensity, time, type, volume, and progression.

For beginners, exercising two to three days per week is a good starting point, as it allows time to build both fitness and routine. The intensity should be moderate, around 60% of your estimated HR_{max} . A simple way to estimate HR_{max} is by subtracting your age from 220. Each workout should last approximately 30-40 minutes, with the goal of gradually increasing either the duration or the number of weekly sessions until you reach the recommended 150 minutes per week.

Volume refers to the total amount of exercise completed over a week. For aerobic exercise, this can be estimated by multiplying the frequency of workouts by the duration of each session. As fitness improves, progression becomes essential. Without gradually increasing the workload, improvements will eventually plateau. Progression can be achieved by increasing workout duration, frequency, or intensity. It can also involve changing the workout itself, such as incorporating intervals by alternating between running and short bursts of sprinting. Because everyone has different goals and fitness levels, exercise programs should always be adjusted to meet individual needs rather than following a one-size-fits-all approach.

Recovery is just as important as the exercise itself. Taking rest days, getting enough sleep, staying hydrated, and consuming adequate nutrients allow the body to repair and become stronger while reducing the risk of injury and overtraining. When the body exercises, the muscle fibers in the body tear and become damaged, so when the body works to rebuild itself, it rebuilds stronger in order to prepare for the

next session. When not given adequate time to repair, the muscles become weak. It is recommended that you take at least 24 hours to rest after exercising, and you should alternate which muscle group you work on every 48 hours.

Before beginning any workout, it is important to perform a proper warm-up. Warming up prepares the muscles for exercise, increases blood flow, and helps reduce the risk of injury. A warm-up should include dynamic movements that closely resemble the exercises performed during the main workout. For example, if the workout involves running, high knees or leg swings are excellent warm-up exercises.

After completing the workout, it is equally important to perform a cool-down rather than stopping abruptly. A cool-down gradually lowers the heart rate, reduces muscle stiffness, and helps decrease the risk of injury. Static stretching is ideal during this stage because the muscles are warm, allowing for a greater range of motion and improved flexibility over time.

When choosing an exercise, it is important to select activities that are both enjoyable and easily accessible. Enjoying the activity makes it much easier to stay motivated and maintain a consistent routine. Choosing a location close to home can also reduce barriers such as long commutes. It is also helpful to have both indoor and outdoor exercise options so that weather does not interfere with maintaining an active lifestyle. Throughout every workout, it is important to monitor your symptoms and exercise intensity to avoid overexertion and injury. Although getting started can feel challenging, regular exercise becomes easier over time as healthy habits are established.

Overall, aerobic exercise provides incredible benefits by strengthening the heart and lungs, improving mental health through the release of endorphins, enhancing disease prevention, and increasing overall quality of life. By starting gradually and progressing at a comfortable pace, anyone can successfully build a sustainable exercise routine. There is no better time than now to begin your journey towards a healthier lifestyle.



A couple of vehicles flying over a body of water

Photo courtesy Pivotal

Helix: The Next Flying Car

BY ISABELLA RODRIGUES

You might look at this machine and think it looks strange, but what if I told you that this is not a drone, but actually a flying car. Two years ago, in mid 2024 an American company called Pivotal (Opener) released its newest vehicle.

Helix is the third attempt at a single occupancy machine powered by high-speed fans. The Canadian engineer and inventor Marcus Leng had previously made three versions known as Blackfly. Funnily enough the name "BlackFly" came from the infamous biting insects of the Canadian wilderness, as nod to its southern Ontario roots.



Photo courtesy Creative Commons

Helix inventor Marcus Leng next to Blackfly V2

One thing that sets Helix apart from Blackfly is that this product is on the market, inviting consumers to purchase and partake in the future.

While Helix and Blackfly have both undergone multiple variations, the design has remained roughly the same. They have two curved wings on the front and back of the craft, each with

four propellers, these allow you to take off vertically in a way similar to a helicopter. This makes it much more space efficient and able to travel to many more rural areas, where runways and landing strips may not be available.

Another choice along the design process was to power these vehicles by electricity. This makes them heavier than if it were a gasoline powered vehicle. Depending on the situation, having this machine run on electricity can be a huge pro or con. For example, some rural locations may not have stations to reliably charge a vehicle due to its high voltage requirements (240 V for 75 minutes). However, one upside that it is more cost efficient compared to gas costs that fluctuate often.

Helix isn't just practical because it's an EV it is also partially modular. This means that individuals who do not own a large space to store Helix in its flight ready footprint of 14' by 14' can choose to remove the wings for storage, decreasing its size to 14' by 5'. When the pilot is ready to reassemble their craft, Pivotal is claiming you can fully transform it in half an hour, "Taking it from storage to sky" as they word it.

Due to the FAA's current classification of Helix, you do not need a pilot's license to operate it, but for safety reasons Pivotal does make you complete a comprehensive training to ensure you are familiar with the vehicle's overall performance.

Unfortunately, you are not allowed to use it as a mode of transportation in the city. Still, you could use it in the less populated areas as a

simpler and cheaper way to travel, especially if roads are limited or very busy.

As of the time of writing this Transport Canada has not commented on this rising interest in the industry. So for the time being you cannot operate Helix in Canada.

Personal vehicles aren't the only thing that Pivotal has on its radar, they have also expressed interest in using Helix for public safety. Search and rescue workers can use the vehicle to survey large areas that may be costly or difficult to do with traditional helicopters, that are larger and require more expensive fuel. EMT's (Emergency Medical Technicians) can use Helix to travel to emergencies quicker, bypassing traffic, or rural areas in order to provide life-saving care faster than a grounded ambulance.

After all that, you are probably wondering how much this marvel of the sky costs. Pivotal offers a number of packages for you to choose from. All ranging in prices and accessories included.

The base package starts at \$190,000 USD and includes a flight panel, a landing camera charger, transportation cart, pilot training and a warranty. The second middle tier package costs \$240,000 USD and comes with a fancier transportation cart, two chargers, a camera with landing assistance, and, air traffic assist. The final package is the most expensive and costs \$260,000 and includes three chargers, aircraft lighting, emergency locator transmission and an additional pilot training for a friend of family member, and the option to fully customize the exterior of your Helix.

If you want to purchase your own aircraft or enquire about it further, you can visit Pivotal's website at pivotal.aero To reserve your own personal aircraft today, they do require a \$9,000 deposit to confirm you are a serious buyer. But if you're not ready to take on that expense, the company also offers the option to request a demonstration flight to ensure you're informed in your purchase.

Helix won't replace your car for the morning commute, not yet, anyway. But it is proof that the future of personal flight isn't a PowerPoint slide or a concept gathering dust at a trade show. It's a certified, production-ready aircraft that people can actually buy today. Though limited to a few countries for now, places like China, Japan, and the United States have seen great success with them. As regulatory frameworks catch up and infrastructure expands, vehicles like this could quietly rewrite the rules of commuting. For anyone who's ever looked up at a helicopter and wished they could skip the traffic, that's not science fiction anymore. That's a product and it's taking off.



Fashion for Men

BY DOUGLAS J. SCAMMELL

In a World Dominated by Digital Screens, Consider Traditional Craftsmanship

When it comes to men's accessories, the one piece that is the most important is a great watch. Everyone's taste and needs are different whether it's a sports watch, a health watch or a classic, all of which provides time of day. Equally important is, a nice watch is a symbol of personal discipline, and a subtle non-verbal signal to others that you value structure, punctuality, reliability. It shows that you respect your own time and that of others as well as keeping you well informed through the modern day watch that provides Apps for just about everything. Men for the most part generally wear very little jewelry and a timepiece serves as the ultimate functional accessory.



Photo courtesy DJ Scammell

In today's modern world a man should have over time essentially 3 different types of watches in his watch collection.

1. The Everyday Watch: Often called a go anywhere, do anything watch. It bridges the gap between sporty and smart. It typically features a metal bracelet a dark or blue dial, moderate water resistance (100m), and can be worn to the office, the grocery store, or a casual dinner.



2. The Sport/Dive Watch: An ultra-durable timepiece built to take a beating. It handles sweat, water, and drops with ease, typically featuring a rubber or stainless steel strap, high water resistance (200m+), and a rotating bezel to track elapsed time. (This style is my personal favorite to wear).



3. The Dress Watch: Designed strictly for formal settings, business meetings, or black tie events. It is defined by a thin profile, a clean minimal dial, and a leather strap. It is meant to slide easily underneath a suit cuff.



There are some categories I like to point out to help you decide your budget to help you decide what type of watch will work best for you.

Budget: (\$0-\$250) Focuses on reliable Japanese quartz movements, digital utility, and durable everyday materials.

Entry Level: (\$250-\$1,000) Offers entry level automatic movements, sapphire crystals, and solid stainless steel construction.

Mid-Range: (\$1,000-\$5,000) Features entry to mid luxury Swiss automatics, heritage brands, and excellent finishing.

Luxury: (\$5,000+) Focuses on in-house mechanical movements, precious metals, high complications, and premium brand prestige.

It is also very important to know what not to do with your beautiful watches. The building I live at has a beautiful pool, hot tub, sauna and steam room and unfortunately I see all the time people making this terrible mistake of wearing their beautiful Rolex diving and sport watches in these amenities. These watches are never to be used in these types of places even though these watches are highly waterproof against cold ocean depths, but extreme heat from a hot tub, sauna, or steam room will expand the rubber gaskets. The hot steam will penetrate the seals and leave condensation under the crystal. Soap and shampoo can also degrade the waterproof seals over time.

Purchasing a high-quality luxury watch is widely considered a great investment primarily because certain prestigious timepieces reliably retain their value or appreciate over time, defying the immediate depreciation that plagues most other consumer luxury products.

Unlike buying a luxury car or a designer clothing which usually drops in value the moment it's used. The iconic luxury timepieces benefit from global market stability, strict production caps, and a booming secondary market ecosystem.

The luxury watches are built from ultra-premium materials like surgical-grade stainless steel, 18K gold, titanium, and scratch resistant sapphire crystal, these mechanical pieces are designed to survive for generations. They double as a high value family heirloom that carries deep sentimental and financial weight.

A wristwatch is far more than a tool for keeping time, it is the ultimate statement piece for the modern gentlemen. In a world dominated by digital screens a mechanical or well-crafted timepiece represents a deliberate choice to value tradition, craftsmanship, and mindfulness. It serves as an anchor of personal style, seamlessly tying your outfit together. Ultimately watch fashion matters like I have mentioned before it speaks before you do. It reflects your personality, marks your milestones, and communicates respect for both your time and time of others.

OUR CITY *Tonight*

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SUMMER VIEWING

THE VIEW #1 – *The Easy Kind*



One of the most interesting films of the summer is called *The Easy Kind*. It's a documentary-style film that's also auto-fiction. The good news, the film works! It follows country singer, Elizabeth Cook (known in the film as "EC", a fictionalized version of herself) as she navigates the often brutal world of the music industry. She was a gifted child singer, performing with her parents until Nashville came calling. But the "cookie-cutter" constraints placed on her that went with a recording contract – basically show up pretty, sexy outfit – wasn't something Elizabeth aka "EC" was willing to go along with. It clearly, and sadly, hurt her career. Jump ahead years later as she navigates midlife, career uncertainty and ex-loves, what shines through all of this is her music. Clearly that gift has not been diminished. Elizabeth Cook delivers a real, open and vulnerable performance playing herself. Actresses Karen Allen (*Raiders of the Lost Ark*) and Susie Essman (*Curb Your Enthusiasm*) appear in supporting roles, and late night TV icon David Letterman appears in a cameo. Clearly, he has been a long-time fan. *The Easy Kind* is now available for home viewing. Photo courtesy Big Mouth Productions

THE VIEW #2 – *The Brink of War*



We are so grateful that filmmakers still have a desire to make films like *The Brink of War*. As history slowly slips away with those who lived it, combined with it a declining interest in learning about it, movies like this need and deserve to be seen, like this summer's other historical film, *Pressure*, set during the weekend leading up to D-Day. *The Brink of War*, also takes place over a couple of days, in this case 1986. Set in the latter part of the 30 year Cold War (and as the world was on the brink of war), then President Ronald Reagan journeyed to Reykjavik, Iceland to meet then Russian General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev. The goal between these long-time enemies was to find common ground on which a possible negotiated plan could be built that would completely dismantle their respective nuclear arsenals. High stakes would be an understatement. *The Brink of War* is a fascinating film which pulls back the curtain to show that, despite the countless advisors, intelligence agencies, and preprepared strategies, it would still come down to these two powerful men sitting in a room trying to understand one another. The cast is superb: Jeff Daniels as President Reagan; Jared Harris as Gorbachev, and J.K. Simmons as the U.S. Secretary of State. This film is in theatres now, and in the End Credits there is a wonderful "Pay It Forward" tie in. www.angel.com Photo courtesy Angel Studios

THE VIEW #3 – *The Devil's Mouth*



Earlier this summer, we showcased a film in this column and on *Our City Tonight* called *The Bay*. It is the story a couple of Gen-Z women in Thailand for a friend's wedding who decide to take an eco-boat tour to a tiger shark sanctuary. As we said at the time, what could possibly go wrong? Thailand is the setting again, this time it's a another group of Gen-Z characters who are determined to enjoy one last big adventure before returning home to the beginnings of their lives in the "real world". They sign up for a guided swim through a remote cave system called The Devil's Mouth. Again, what could possibly go wrong? At first, its fantastic and a very cool experience. But that fun quickly turns to a fight for survival when a storm floods the series of caves with seawater, and with it, an aggressive bull shark. Unlike *The Bay*, which was set tantalizingly close to shore and in the light of day, *The Devil's Mouth* is in an extremely claustrophobic and dark setting. This film is another entry in the horror-survival genre, made better by that setting and the lead actress, Kathryn Newton. *The Devil's Mouth* is available for home viewing on Prime Video. www.primevideo.com Photo courtesy Prime Video

Acclaimed Canadian Author "Spying on America"

Our City Tonight recently sat down with Bill Gaston, one of Canada's most acclaimed authors. His award-winning career spans novels, short fiction, memoirs, poetry, and plays. His latest release, *Spying on America*—his 20th book—is a thoughtful, often humorous memoir about a road trip with his two sons, through the American West as they explored their American heritage.

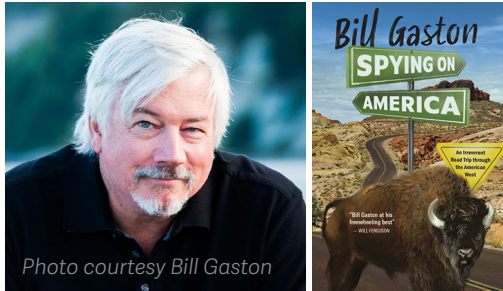


Photo courtesy Bill Gaston
Bill Gaston explores his surprising American heritage

OCT: Bill, you were born in the United States but moved to Canada as an infant. You've lived in Toronto, Vancouver, and now on one of British Columbia's Gulf Islands.

BG: Yes, I now live on Gabriola Island. I moved to Canada when I was just nine months old. My dad worked for Sears—back then it was called Sears Roebuck in the United States—and was transferred to Canada. We first lived in Vancouver near 41st Avenue and Fraser Street. Those are actually my earliest memories. We stayed there until I was about three years old before moving on. Over the years, I've lived in Winnipeg, Toronto, Vancouver, and several other places.

OCT: Your new book was written as the world was emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic. During that time, you took a road trip with your sons to discover your American roots. What surprised you the most?

BG: The biggest surprise actually came before we even left. I was researching my previous book, *Just Let Me Look at You*, about my father. He was a very private man who told us almost nothing about his past. In fact, he often made things up because he was so afraid of confronting it.

During that research, I discovered that my great-great-great-grandparents, George and Maria Gaston, were Congregationalist ministers. Congregationalists were an offshoot of the Puritans and, in many ways, even stricter. You couldn't drink tea or coffee, you couldn't sing or dance—it was a very disciplined way of life.

They founded the town of Tabor, Iowa, naming it after the biblical Mount Tabor. Their purpose was to establish the westernmost hub of the "Underground Railroad" to help enslaved people escape north to freedom in Canada. Learning that completely changed my understanding of my family's history. Even more remarkable was seeing an old photograph of George Gaston. He looks almost exactly like my son Vaughn. It's uncanny.

OCT: Your other son had some fun teasing Vaughn about looking so much like his ancestor.

BG: He certainly did. There's actually a museum dedicated to George and Maria Gaston in Tabor, and the town square is called Gaston Square. Many of the original buildings are still standing. Originally, my brother and I had planned to make the trip together. We joked that we'd visit our ancestors' graves and have a beer with them. But beyond the humour, we genuinely wanted to see this place that had played such an important role in our family history—a history we hadn't even known existed. In the end, my brother was not able to go, and I made the journey with my two sons instead.

OCT: It made for quite a road trip. You travelled through Washington, Montana, South Dakota, Nebraska, Iowa, Wyoming, Idaho, and Oregon. One thing I noticed in the book was the focus on food. You write that two of the most important things a spy needs to know about a country are what its people eat and what they watch on television. Since you were "spying" on America, could you expand on that?

BG: We travelled primarily through what are often considered red states. It was between Donald Trump's two presidential terms, so we were observing a part of America that had embraced a political movement many people outside the

country struggled to understand. Looking at what people eat and what they watch can tell you a surprising amount about a culture. The typical American diet really stood out to us. There's an incredible amount of processed food, sugar, and corn syrup. I'll admit some of it is pretty tasty, and I'm not completely immune to enjoying it myself.

OCT: Your sons weren't particularly impressed with the food either.

BG: One of my sons has an autoimmune disorder, so he has to be very careful about what he eats. He was genuinely shocked by how difficult it was to find food that wasn't loaded with sugar or corn syrup. It really highlighted the differences between American and Canadian food culture. That said, we also ate some fantastic meals along the way. Interestingly, most of the best food we found was Mexican cuisine.

OCT: By the end of the journey, did you come away believing that heritage is something we're born into or something we choose to explore?

BG: The deepest connection I have isn't with ancestors I never knew. It's with my children and, one day, with their children. That's where my heritage truly lives. That's where I can make a difference and leave something meaningful behind. I couldn't genuinely form a heartfelt connection with people who lived generations before me, but I can with the generations that follow. That's the heritage that matters most to me.

OCT: Do you think your sons might someday take their own children back to Tabor and make a similar journey?

BG: I wouldn't doubt it. I hope they do.

OCT: Your work has earned some of Canada's highest literary honours. You received the Ethel Wilson Fiction Prize for *The World and the Timothy Findley Award* recognizing your outstanding body of work, which now spans 20 books. You've also been shortlisted for both the Governor General's Literary Award and The Giller Prize. Congratulations on the release of *Spying on America*. We hope there are many more books still to come.



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