



489 Old Island Hwy.
Courtenay, B.C.
V8N 3P5
Phone: 335-2003

July 1, 2002

Dear Reader,

The Comox Valley Social Planning Council formed in the early nineties, the result of an "Inter-Agency" meeting of professionals, local governments, and community members.

Its initial objectives were to: "maintain awareness of existing service networks", "to develop a consolidated approach for the creation of new or improved services", and "to prioritize needs and serve as an advisory body" (re: funding).

Two early initiatives of the group, one a survey, one a Healthy Communities Project, identified Youth as a predominant concern in the Valley. As a result a "youth organizer" was hired under the supervision of the Council, funded jointly by the Ministry of Health and all local governments, "to establish programs for and with youth".

As early as 1994 the Council began discussing the gathering of statistics from our community and others for comparison purposes. How well do we compare with other communities in health and safety? In education, employment and income? Where should our individual and collective resources and energies be directed?

This Report is the realization of those discussions. It is a snapshot in time of how our community looks. It is a base-line with which to compare ourselves in the future, to be able to look back at and ask, "How well are we doing in improving our quality of life?"

We thank the Advisory Committee members who helped guide us through this project, from the initial brainstorming of the Indicators in 2001, to the final editing in June 2002. And we thank the North Island Employment Foundations Society for the funding for two researchers.

The producers of this Report hope that decision-makers will use this document to inform their decisions. The Comox Valley is truly a wonderful place to live. By assessing our strengths and weaknesses, and acting on that information, we can only make it better.

Sincerely,

EM (Bunny) Shannon, President
For the Comox Valley Social Planning Society

PUTTING PEOPLE FIRST

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Context Map of the Comox Valley

Executive Summary

A. Background

This report provides a snapshot of the quality of life in the Comox Valley at the start of the new millennium. It can be used as an educational resource for residents, a tool for those responsible for planning services and as a measure against which future data may be compared.

The Comox Valley is a beautiful rural and urban setting where considerable natural resources, plant and animal species, and opportunities for recreation exist. Yet at the same time there is the problem of underemployment, which leads to stressful lives, poverty, domestic violence, and ill health. On the other hand the community has rallied to alleviate some of these sufferings through support programs and an impressive volunteer effort.

Readers are encouraged to study these descriptive pages of analysis as well as the tables of data upon which they are based. This first report focuses on establishing a baseline for measuring well-being and a preliminary analysis. Many of the indicators of the quality of life in this valley are compared with those in the communities of Campbell River area, the Cowichan Valley, and British Columbia as a whole.

The area used for the report includes Courtenay, Cumberland, Comox, Regional District areas A, B, C, and K (Hornby and Denman Islands). Most of the information is based on the 1996 Census and BC STATS Demographic Profiles. External data was gathered from the community and the sources are noted in the report.

The Comox Valley Social Planning Society received funding from North Island Employment Foundation Society (NIEFS) to hire Norah McLean, BA and M.D. (Mike) MacDonell, BA, MPA to produce the Quality of Life Report. Norah and Mike worked with Elizabeth (Bunny) Shannon, the Project Manager, and a 20 member Quality of Life Advisory Committee to establish the indicators that were used in this report. Where possible the report follows the method used by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities Quality of Life reporting system. The Advisory Committee also helped with suggestions for the Quality of Life model, format, data sources, and revisions to the drafts of the report. More information about the selection of indicators is described in the Methodology on page 7.

Executive Summary

B. Quality of Life Indicators

Twelve sections containing a total of fifty indicators are included in the Comox Valley Quality of Life Report.

- Population
- Employment & Income
- Education
- Housing & Residency
- Food Security
- Health
- Health Professionals
- Community Involvement
- Leisure, Parks, and Recreation
- Public Transportation & Accessibility
- Public Safety
- Environmental Quality

The following points highlight some of the major findings from the research. For more information, please consult the appropriate sections and specific indicator. The first section, Population, begins on page 13.

- The Comox Valley experienced rapid population and economic growth between 1991 and 1996 followed by a decrease in population and higher unemployment rates in the last few years of the 1990's and into 2000 and 2001.
- Consumer and Business bankruptcies have been steadily increasing over the past five years.
- According to the International Adult Literacy Survey 40% of adults in Canada have difficulty reading and writing. In the Comox Valley a third of the population over 15 years of age do not have a high school certificate. This may reflect conditions in earlier times when education and employment were not so closely linked.

Executive Summary

- Almost half the tenants in the Valley pay more than 30% of their income on housing. This is considered “relative homelessness” in a United Nations definition.
- Food banks are no longer a temporary form of relief. Between 100 and 200 people are attending lunches four days a week at St George’s church. On Hornby Island 41% of the families require food assistance. There are many community programs in the Valley to help feed people lacking in resources.
- Although the number of suicides has decreased over the last several years, the Valley has a higher percentage of suicides compared to the provincial average.
- Crisis line calls indicate a high level of mental stress in our community.
- Municipal and regional voter turn out was less than 50% in all areas of the Comox Valley except Cumberland where voter turn out was 61%.
- Spousal assaults have increased more than 100% since 2000 and the rate of spousal assault is higher in the Valley than the BC average.
- An increase in break and enters is directly related to the rise in drug use in the Comox Valley.
- There are over 50 parks within the boundaries of the 3 municipalities and others in the Regional District and Islands. Recreational opportunities include programs for people with low incomes in Courtenay and Comox.

The quality of life indicators in this report cover a wide area of social, economic, and environmental issues that affect individual and community well-being. It is not our purpose using the report to create competition among governments, however our local, regional, and national governments have a responsibility to apply their legislative powers to address these areas of concern. Our aim is to establish an information base where all three governments can work together with community groups, local businesses, non-profit agencies, funders, and citizens to help develop the existing assets in the Comox Valley to create a stronger and healthier community for everyone.

Introduction

Quality of Life Report

Our well-being depends on a wide range of social, economic and environmental factors. The Comox Valley Quality of Life Report highlights a number of measurable indicators to monitor changes about key issues that affect the quality of life in our community.

This is the first Comox Valley Quality of Life Report and it gives us a baseline for future reports as well as a place to start discussions about well-being in our community. Over time these reports will show us if we are moving in the right direction. Are we doing better, staying the same, or getting worse?

According to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, “the Quality of Life Reporting System was born out of a desire to bring a community based perspective to the development of public policy and to monitor the consequences of changing demographics, as well as shifting responsibilities and fiscal arrangements”. (The FCM Quality of Life Reporting System. Quality of Life in Canadian Communities. May, 1999)

Quality of Life Indicators

Quality of life indicators are measurable sets of data that can be used as tools that simplify and communicate important issues and trends. Looking at an indicator in a broader context can give us an indication of quality of life for the whole community.

Indicators can be compared with other similar communities and over time determine trends in community conditions. Based on these trends, decisions can be made to improve outcomes in specific areas. Positive trends can be highlighted, recognized, and actively maintained. The beginnings of negative trends can be detected and action taken to address areas of concern.

The indicators used in this report were selected based on the following criteria:

- important to the social, environmental, and economic well-being of the community
- statistically measurable and comparable to other communities

Introduction

- availability and reliability of data and resources
- information that can be gathered and monitored over time
- data that can be used for analysis, and
- data that can be understood as a valid measure for improvement

Quality of Life Framework

Most of the indicators in this report are the same as those used in the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) Quality of Life Reporting System. Many Canadian communities are using this framework, which makes it possible for comparative studies across Canada. To provide a comparative analysis we included Cowichan Valley and Campbell River Area, similar to the framework of the Community Impact Profile for Surrey/White Rock.

The Quality of Life report by itself does not change the conditions in a community. However it can be used to guide the government and community to focus on areas of concern. Publishing the first quality of life report will be the first step in a larger strategy to create positive change as we work together toward a healthier Comox Valley.

Methodology

A record of the process used in designing and implementing the first Comox Valley Quality of Life Report provides an interesting lesson in methodology. Those involved in future quality of life projects can learn from the information we provide here. The Methodology Chart on page 8 gives a brief visual overview of the process.

This project began as an initiative of the Comox Valley Social Planning Society. The society is made up of a diverse group of community members who are committed to social policy analysis, information and education, research, community problem-solving, innovation in community development, community organizing, and advocacy. Their mission is to promote social planning as a process for developing a healthy community in the Comox Valley.

In May 2001, the Comox Valley Social Planning Society identified forty-nine possible measures of well-being. In November 2001 the Society applied for and received funding from North Island Employment Foundation Society (NEIFS) for two research/analyst positions for "The Quality of Life Project". Support for all other expenses came from a Grant-In-Aid awarded to the Comox Valley Social Planning Society by the Comox-Strathcona Regional District. The time line for the project was established to run from January 2002 to July 2002. The purpose of the project was to collaboratively develop indicators, measure them and prepare a base-line report that will enable citizens, government, agencies, the business community and non-profit organizations to shape policy and actions to address issues.

The Comox Valley Quality of Life Advisory Committee was formed and included representation from:

Vancouver Island Health Authority
School District #71 School Trustees
Social Planning & Research Council of B C (SPARCBC)
C V Social Planning Society
Early Childhood Development Project
Council of Canadians
Youth Probation
Vancouver Island Health Authority
Nutritionist
Comox Strathcona Regional District Directors
Project Watershed
Hornby Island Economic Development Society
Hornby Island Health Society
John Howard Society
Previous Health Council member
Previous MLA

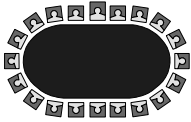
Methodology

Methodology Chart



Comox Valley Social Planning

Society identifies possible measures of well-being.



Formation of Advisory Committee

Hired Project Research/Analysts

Established set of Quality of Life Indicators



Collected Data & Research

Worked with Advisory Committee to select report format and framework

Prepared report tables



Discussion and feedback from the Advisory Committee



Prepared draft report

Discussed and edited draft with working group



Made revisions



'First' Final Report

Methodology

Project manager, Elizabeth Shannon (President of the CV Social Planning Society), provided leadership and direction, and the Advisory Committee provided guidance, support, and recommendations for the project. Norah McLean, BA and M.D.(Mike) MacDonell, BA, MPA began working on the project on January 14, 2002.

Using the possible measures of well-being from May 2001, the Advisory Committee established a set of indicators that would best illustrate social conditions in a range of topic areas. Fifty-four indicators in eleven topic areas were selected. In January Mike and Norah began gathering models and templates from numerous municipalities and communities to determine the best model to use to illustrate social conditions in the Valley. They divided up the topic areas for research, data collection, and analysis. Norah worked on Employment & Income, Housing & Residency, Food Security, Community Involvement, Public Safety, and Public Transportation & Accessibility. Mike worked on Population, Education, Health, Health Professionals, Leisure, Parks & Recreation, and Environmental Quality. In addition Norah wrote the Executive Summary, Introduction, Methodology, and did all desktop publishing and final editing.

Volunteer Catherine Hill joined the project in February to assist with additional data collection on Hornby and Denman Islands and volunteer John Higginbothan phoned Comox Valley Doctors and Dentists to collect information about availability. Data collection began in late January and continued until June.

Following suggestions from the Advisory Committee, indicators for transportation accessibility for people with mobility impairments and an indicator for the number of churches were added. A number of indicators were dropped because information was not available. Other indicators were grouped together; for instance: Crime rate (Domestic Violence) and the number of Spousal Assaults. As a result of these adjustments a total of 50 indicators are presented in the report in 12 sections.

For ease of reading and formatting style, the Community Impact Profile for Surrey/White Rock was used as a guide. In addition, the Federation of Municipalities Reporting System was used as a template to ensure the report could be used in the future for comparative research.

To provide comparative data Campbell River Area, Cowichan Valley, and BC average statistics were used where possible. Campbell River Area and the

Methodology

Cowichan Valley were selected as comparable to the Comox Valley because they are both Vancouver Island communities and the total population numbers were similar.

A report table with the indicators grouped into sections was developed to assist in writing and analysis. The report tables included Comox Valley Data, Comparative Data, and notes on the importance of the information. The report table was sent to the advisory committee and other interested people in late April for comments with a deadline for mid-May. Based on comments and suggestions, revisions were completed and writing of the sections began May 15th, working toward a publishing deadline of June 15th.

A questionnaire was distributed at the Health and Wellness Fair, which asked two questions about quality of life in the Comox Valley:

- What do you like best about your quality of life?
- What would make your quality of life better?

Some comments from the questionnaires are quoted throughout the report.

The following meetings and workshops were attended to gather additional community information:

Health and Wellness Network, Adolescent Resource Lineworkers Network, Ad Hoc Emergency Resources Organization(AHERO), and Volunteer Coordinators Network, Social Planning Society, Early Childhood Development Project Advisory Committee Meetings, Community Values, Health Promotion Workshop, Comox Valley Wellness Forum, Comox Valley Wellness Coalition, Building Partnership Workshop, and The Strength Within Us Prevention Forum 2002.

The first draft of quality of life report was completed in June 2002. All advisory committee members were invited to give feedback and a working committee was established to edit and provide feedback on the analysis of the data. The final report was completed in July.

Methodology

What were the challenges?

1. Statistics Canada and BC STATS 1996 census data was used in the report. The Comox Valley Quality of Life Report boundary encompasses Comox Strathcona Regional District areas A, B,C, and K, City of Courtenay, Town of Comox, and the Village of Cumberland. School District #71 and Local Health Area 71 use the same boundary definition. Statistics Canada boundary definitions changed between 1996 and 2001. In 2001 Area C was taken out of the census agglomeration for Courtenay area. This change was adjusted for by including Area C in our 2001 census data.
2. The report relies on 1996 census information that is now six years old. The only data available from the 2001 census was the population count and these numbers have been included in the report.
3. The biggest challenge was the limited budget. Funding for the project was provided by North Island Employment Foundations Society(NIEFS) and the Comox Valley Social Planning Society. Supervision, administration, publishing costs, and technical support were provided by the Social Planning Society with the support of the Regional District of Comox-Strathcona. Office space and equipment was provided by Comox Valley Community Action Centre(a coalition of local groups, mostly small non-profits), and private loans of equipment.
4. It was a challenge to complete all of the work within six months. It requires a considerable amount of time for research, data collection, gathering reference material, analysis of the information, revisions, desktop publishing and printing. In addition a decision was made to include our report tables for a quick reference in the final report, and adjustments to the report tables required an additional amount of time. We planned in the beginning of the project to enter all the data in an EXCEL format data base, and to do public presentations in the last month. Because there was limited time to finish everything, we focused on finalizing the report by July 2002. The Comox Valley Social Planning Society will be presenting it to community leaders and the public in September.
5. Some of the data was difficult to collect or not available. Although there was some information from Hornby Island, it was a bit more difficult to collect data for Denman Island. It was not possible to get an accurate count for the number of non-profit societies in the Comox Valley. Some of the data requested was not forthcoming after several calls, letters, and e-mail messages.

Methodology

6. BC STATS demographic profiles of Campbell River Area, Cowichan Valley, and BC were used for a comparative study. It was not always possible to get comparative data for some indicators that were not part of the BC STATS demographic profiles. However, because this was the first Quality of Life Report and the purpose is to establish a baseline, the next Quality of Life Report will be able to use all of the indicators in a comparative way.

What did we learn?

1. The time wasn't long enough to allow for completion of all the goals of the project. Data collection, analysis, writing and revisions took much longer than anticipated.
2. A larger budget would have helped with the overall administration, expanded the time-line, and covered the cost of publishing.



Population

Population Indicators in this section:

1. Population growth and characteristics
2. Number of lone parent families
3. Number of families

1. Population Growth and Characteristics

According to the 2001 census, the total population of the Comox Valley is 54,635. The Comox Valley (area within School District # 71 boundaries) include: Comox, Courtenay, Cumberland, and Comox Strathcona Regional District Electoral Areas A, B, C, and (K after 1999). Between 1991 and 1996, the population grew dramatically jumping from 44, 522 to 54,912, a 23.3 % increase. During the same time, the population of British Columbia rose by 13.5%.

From 1996 to 2001 the Comox Valley population fell marginally to 54,635 in 2001, a -0.5 % decline. During the same time, the population of British Columbia rose by 4.9 %.

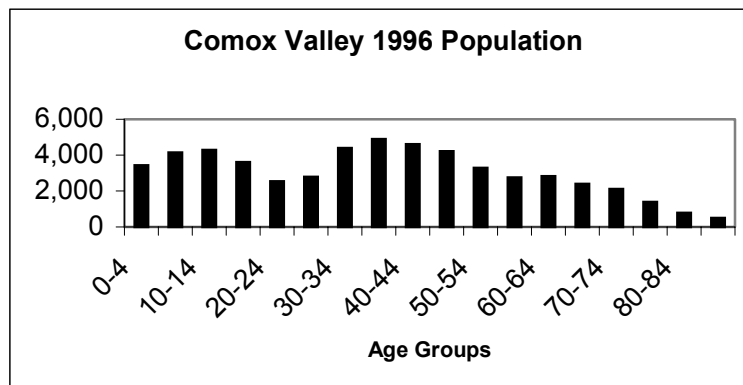


Population

Population Growth 1996 to 2001

Location	Percent Change between 1996 and 2001 Population
Comox	+0.9 %
Courtenay	+5.2 %
Cumberland	+2.7 %
Area A	-3.5 %
Area B	-1.6 %
Area C	-12.0 %
Area K	-2.7 %
British Columbia	4.9 %

Substantial increases in population lead to greater housing starts, additional tax revenue generation, additional schools being built and more business starts. Population increase also brings about additional road congestion, more air pollution, longer line-ups and greater use of facilities.





Population

In 1996 the Comox Valley population was divided almost evenly between the sexes, with females accounting for 50.7 % and males 49.3 %.

2. Number of Lone Parent Families

In 1996, there were 2,115 lone parent families in the Comox Valley. Of these, females headed 86.49 %. Comox Valley percentage of lone parent families at 23.9% compares equally with Campbell River Area at 22.3 %, Cowichan Valley at 22.7 %, and the BC average of 22.7%.

In the Comox Valley, Courtenay had the highest percentage of lone parent families at 42.18 %. Area C had 34.12 %, then Comox with 17.30 %, followed by Cumberland with 6.40 %.

Socioeconomic conditions of lone parent families vary greatly from families headed by two parents. Lone parent families, usually headed by females, have less income to purchase basic necessities.

3. Number of Families

The family with a husband, a wife and 1.8 children at home made up the majority of families with children in 1996.

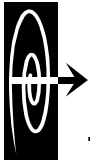
Number of Census Families and Percent of Children

Location	Number of Census families	% with no children	% with children at home	Average Number of Children
Comox Valley	15,935	44.4 %	55.6 %	1.8
Campbell River Area	12,010	36.9 %	60.8 %	1.9
Cowichan Valley	14,165	43.6 %	56.4 %	1.9
British Columbia	1,008,440	39.2 %	60.8 %	1.8



Population

Legally married and not separated people over 15 years of age in 1996 residing in the Comox Valley amounted to just over 56.19 %. Single people accounted for 24.89 %. Legally married but separated numbered 3.93 %. Divorced people made up 9.64 %. Widowed people made up 5.70 %.



The population increase was dramatic between 1991 and 1996 but fell slightly between 1996 and 2001.



Employment & Income

Employment & Income Indicators in this Section:

1. Employment by sector
2. Income levels
3. Percentage of families on social assistance
4. Percentage of low income families
5. Unemployment rate
6. Number of bankruptcies

1. Employment by Sector

Primary industry includes all resource-based industry such as forestry, fishing, and agriculture. Secondary industry includes manufacturing and construction. Tertiary industry includes all government and non-government services.

The primary industry rate in the Comox Valley in 1996 at 10.8% of the labour force was almost twice as high as the provincial average of 5.7%. The secondary industry rate at 15.8% was lower than the BC average of 17.9%. Tertiary or service industry rate was 72.2% compared to the BC average 71.5%.

Although service industries account for 72.2% of the employed labour force, the Comox Valley has experienced loss of work in the fishing and forestry industry over the past several years. "A heavy dependency on the primary sector increases the vulnerability of a region to swings in the economic cycle resulting in economic hardship". (Statistics Canada)



Employment & Income

The largest employers in the Comox Valley are Canadian Forces Base Comox, School District #71, St Josephs Hospital, and Mt Washington Alpine Resort. A new shopping centre opened in 2001. Walmart, Future Shop, and other new retail stores moved into the Comox Valley.

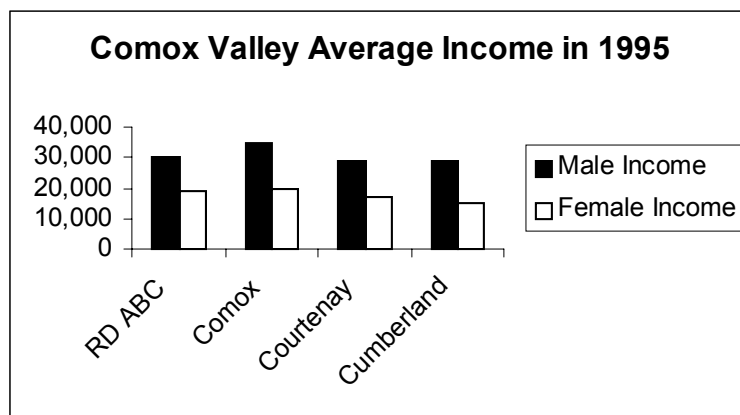
CV Quality of Life Questionnaire – What do you like best about your quality of life?

“I like the ease of accessing urban and rural aspects of our community. ie: stores, rivers, green space, walkway, etc.
Much of life can be enjoyed with minimal use of cars.”

2. Income Levels

Income includes salaries and wages, income from self-employment, government transfer payments, investment income, retirement pensions and other income.

The Comox Valley average income for women in 1995 was between \$12,000 and \$14,000.00 lower than the average for men.



The 1995 average employment income was lower in the Comox Valley at \$24,407 than the average for BC (\$27,903), Campbell River Area (\$28,187) and Cowichan Valley (\$26,124).

Average family income is the average income of all members of that family 15 years and older that were received during the year preceding the Census.



Employment & Income

The average family income in the Comox Valley in 1995 at \$49,740 was lower than the average for BC (\$56,527), Campbell River Area (\$56,344), and Cowichan Valley (\$52,300).

Higher incomes and social status are linked to better health and social well being.

CV Quality of Life Questionnaire – What would make your quality of life better?

“A child care subsidy for more people (myself included as I did not even qualify before the cuts!!) If I am only working part-time and I pay the most expensive [childcare], then it is financially not feasible to work.”

3. Percentage of Families on Social Assistance

In September 2001, the percentage of people receiving social assistance in the Comox Valley at 7.6% was higher than the Cowichan Valley at 7.1% and the BC average of 5.3%. In the Comox Valley there are approximately 1,685 children (0 – 18) living in families receiving social assistance. Children living in poverty are over 2 ½ times more likely to have problems with basic abilities such as hearing, mobility, speech, and vision.¹

With the current changes in BC Employment and Assistance it will be important to see how these changes affect our community when the next Quality of Life Report is completed. The Comox Valley and their elected governments may experience increased demands to provide assistance from local taxes and from volunteer resources.

¹ David Ross and Paul Roberts. Canadian Council on Social Development Income and Child Well-being: A new perspective on the poverty debate. 1999



Employment & Income

4. Percentage of Families Living Below the Low Income Cut Off (LICO)

In 1996, 17.15% of families living in the Comox Valley lived below LICO and 23.9% of families are single parent families. Almost one in six children in BC live in poverty, almost 25% of these live in families with full-time, full year employment.² Children in single parent families experience poverty more than three times as much as children in two-parent families.³

Because there are more single parent women than men, and women's income levels are lower than men's income levels many single parent families are struggling to meet basic needs.

"Policy directions that reduce the number of Canadians living on low incomes, limit the exclusion of low income Canadians from participating in Society, and restore the social safety net, are the

most effective means by which the heart health of Canadians can be improved."

(North York Heart Health Network. *Inequality is Bad for Our Hearts: Why Low Income and Social Exclusion Are Major Causes of Heart Disease*, November 2001)

5. Unemployment Rates

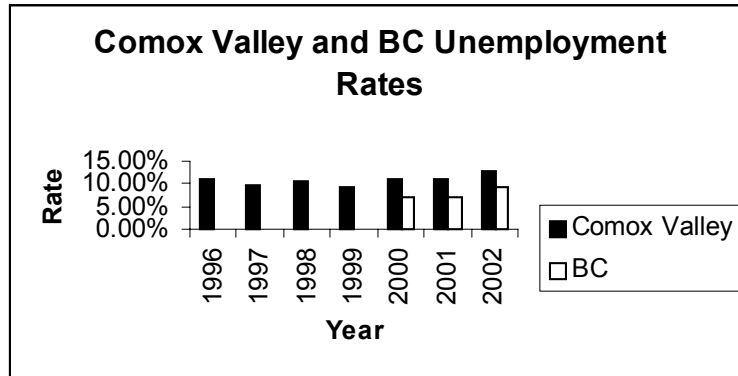
The Comox Valley experienced rapid population and economic growth between 1991 and 1996 followed by a decrease in population and higher unemployment rates in the last few years of the 1990's and into 2000 and 2001.

² Child Poverty in British Columbia Report Card 2000

³ Government of Canada National Council of Welfare Reports [Child Poverty Profile 1998](#), Summer 2001



Employment & Income



The Comox Valley unemployment rate increased to 12.8% in 2002 from 11.5% in 1996. From 2000 to 2002 the Comox Valley average unemployment rate was higher than the average for BC.

The Comox Valley has experienced job loss in the fishing and forestry industry over the past several years that created a ripple effect in other areas of employment.

Unemployment, especially long-term unemployment is associated with poorer health. A decrease in population indicates that people have moved out of the Comox Valley for work opportunities elsewhere.

CV Quality of Life Questionnaire – What would make your quality of life better?

“A permanent full time job would improve my quality of life. I would feel more secure and happier and know that I could settle. I won’t do that till I have a full time job.”

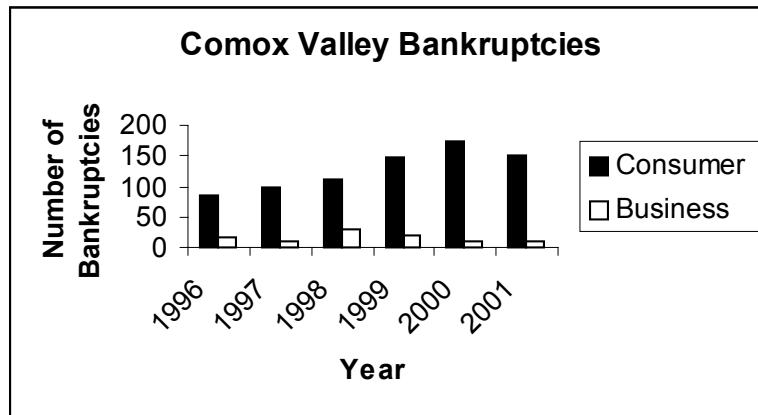
6. Number of Bankruptcies

In 2001 there were 163 bankruptcies in the Comox Valley. This represents a 61% increase from 1996 totals. Between 1996 and 2001 over 96 businesses went



Employment & Income

bankrupt in the Comox Valley. In the same time period, 767 consumer bankruptcies were recorded.



Bankruptcies have increased over the same time in our comparative community of Campbell River. From 70 in 1996 to 207 in 2001.

Consumer bankruptcy figures include the failure of small or home-based businesses because many people use personal assets to secure business loans.

The availability of reliable data for the number of businesses in the Comox Valley is limited. Many small businesses do not apply for business licenses and the licensing records differ in each municipality.

CV Quality of Life Questionnaire – What would make your quality of life better?

“More retail businesses in the shopping centre, especially for younger people and more social clubs would improve my quality of life in the Comox Valley.”

“More industry – more jobs.”

“More opportunity for employment and business.”



Employment & Income

The increase in the number of bankruptcies over the past several years indicates economic stress in our communities.



The Comox Valley economy is recovering from the loss of jobs in forest and fisheries industries and new businesses have located here. Fair wage for women, number of people living below the low income cut off, and the number of bankruptcies are areas of concern.



Education

Education Indicators in this section:

1. Number and percentage of the population (15 years and older) with less than a Grade 9 education
2. Student/Educator ratios
3. The number and percentage of people (15 years and older) who do not have a high school certificate
4. Number and percentage of the population (15 years and older) with a Bachelor's degree or higher
5. Percentage of Grade 12 students who graduate compared to the number who enter Grade 12
6. Adult Literacy/Adult Basic Education

1. Number and percentage of the population (15 years and older) with less than a Grade 9 education

According to the 1996 Census data, the percentage of people in the Comox Valley 15 years or older that had less than a Grade 9 education was 5.39 %.

Research indicates a direct relationship between educational attainment, socioeconomic status and health. People with less than a Grade 9 education tend to be dependent upon services provided by society and often have a greater utilization of health services.

If people do not have a Grade 9 education, how will they be able to benefit from technology and better paying jobs?

2. Student/Educator ratios

There are 31 public schools in School District # 71 Comox Valley, including the alternate schools and North Island Distance Education School (NIDES).



Education

As of December 12, 2001 there were 9,791 students enrolled and 601 teachers (this includes both full time and part time teachers) in School District #71¹. This is a decrease of 179 students and 22 teachers from the previous school year. There are also students enrolled at NIDES and private schools throughout the Comox Valley, although these were not included in the study.

The overall Student/Educator ratio for school year 2000-2001 was 16.46 to 1, down from 16.88 to 1 for 1999-2000². The ratio will increase for the next school year, 2002-2003 as a result of government cutbacks.

Student/Educator comparative ratios 1999 – 2002

	Comox Valley	Campbell River	Cowichan Valley	British Columbia
1999/2000	16.88	16.66	17.36	16.59
2000/2001	16.46	15.83	16.33	16.34
2001/2002	16.38	15.87	16.24	16.34

3. The number and percentage of people 15 years and older who do not have a high school certificate

The number and percentage of people 15 years and older in the Comox Valley, Campbell River Area, and British Columbia who do not have a high school certificate as of the 1996 census are compared below:

	Number who do not have a high school certificate	% who do not have a high school certificate
Comox Valley	14,015	32.66%
Campbell River	7,995	36.02%
British Columbia	918,325	31.08%

¹ Ministry of Education Report 1552A

² Ministry of Education Report 2077



Education

4. Number and percentage of the population (15 years and older) with a Bachelor's degree or higher

The number of people 15 years or older with a bachelor's degree or higher in the Comox Valley was 4,120 or 9.60 %. This compares to Campbell River area whose percentage was 7.3 % and Cowichan Valley at 9.9 %. In British Columbia, the percentage was 13.6 %.

The breakdown by field of study for the Comox Valley with a university degree in 1996:

% Distribution by Field of Study	Courtenay	B C
Educational, Recreational and Counselling	13.5	10.7
Fine & Applied Arts	6.4	5.9
Humanities & Related	4.1	5.9
Social Sciences & Related	7.1	8.8
Commerce, Management & Business Admin	16.4	21.4
Agricultural & Biological Sciences/Tech	5.1	5.2
Engineering & Applied Sciences	2.1	4.2
Engineering & Applied Science Tech/Trades	28.8	22.6
Health Professions, Sciences & Tech	14.3	12.1
Mathematics & Physical Sciences	2.1	3
No Specialization & All Other	0.1	0.1

5. Percentage of Grade 12 students who graduate compared to the number who enter Grade 12

Since the 1998 -1999 school year in the Comox Valley, the percentage of Grade 12 students that graduate as a percentage of the September enrollment has climbed from 69.81% in 1998/1999 to 75.73% in 2000/2001.³

³ Report Number: 1561, BC Ministry of Education Reports



Education

Percentage of Grade 12 students who graduate compared to the number who enter Grade 12

School Year	Comox Valley	Campbell River	Cowichan Valley	British Columbia
1998-1999	69.81 %	61.42 %	79.56 %	74.55 %
1999-2000	71.48 %	66.03 %	84.46 %	75.07 %
2000-2001	75.73 %	65.12 %	89.81 %	76.22 %

In the 1998-1999 school year School District # 71 ranked 34th out of 60 school districts, 36th in 1999-2000, and 31st in 2000-2001.

From 1998 to 2001 in all three comparative school districts, the percentage of females graduating was higher than that of males.

There are various reasons for not graduating Grade 12 in the same school year. Some students take two years to complete Grade 12 while others drop out or move.

6. Adult Literacy/Adult Basic Education

The results of an International Adult Literacy Survey found that approximately 40% of the population in Canada have difficulty with the everyday demands of reading and writing. People with poor literacy skills have problems filling out job applications, understanding bus schedules and reading safety manuals. Problems with literacy have been called the invisible disability.

There are two programs at the Adult Learning Centre: Tutoring and Bootstrap Basics. Tutoring is one-on-one and is free. The tutors are paired with an adult learner based on interests, needs and circumstances. Bootstrap Basics teaches basic computer skills to assist people to improve their employment skills. Participants must be ineligible for Employment Insurance and have a disability. Currently at the Adult Learning Centre there are 40 pairs of people (coach/client) using the tutoring service and there is a wait list.



Education

Literacy problems can be cyclical. A parent may have problems with both parenting and literacy skills and the children grow up in an atmosphere where reading is not emphasized. A kit called BORN TO READ is given to new parents by the Adult Learning Centre to assist parents to help their children become readers and learners.

North Island College offers Adult Basic Education (ABE) courses. ABE Fundamental level courses provide students with the reading and study skills, writing and mathematics needed to complete the equivalent of Grades 8 and 9. ABE Intermediate level courses provide upgrading of basic academic skills to Grade 10. Advanced courses are for those students who wish to upgrade to Grade 11 prior to vocational or technical training. Provincial level courses are the equivalent of Grade 12.

For the period April 1, 2001 to March 31, 2002, at the Comox Valley campus only, the following number of students were enrolled in ABE:

	Fundamental	Intermediate	Advanced	Provincial	Total
Adult Basic Education Enrollment ⁴	106	135	121	192	554



The Comox Valley Grade 12 graduation rate is an area worth additional study.

⁴ North Island College, Susan Toresdahl