



Saanich Civic League E-news

June 23, 2008

I've never seen anything like
this in Greater Victoria.
- Forum participant

Standing Room Only at Saanich Civic League Public Forum on Civic Engagement



Citizens' appetite for rebuilding democracy at the municipal level exceeded organizers' expectations Thursday June 19 at a free public forum on civic engagement, Grand Pacific Hotel Victoria.

From Paralysis to Action: Engaging our Neighbours in a New Kind of Politics publically launched the non-partisan, values-based citizen group, Saanich Civic League. The league's goal is to re-engage Saanich residents in community and civic matters and increase voter turnout for Saanich municipal elections. (just 19% of eligible Saanich voters voted in the most recent municipal election in 2005). www.saanichcivicleague.ca



Organizers estimate 250 to 300 people attended Thursday evening to hear **Guelph Civic League** president **Annie O'Donoghue** describe how values-based citizen engagement dramatically increased voter turnout in her city and changed the face of municipal politics.

Congratulations!!!
Very inspiring and
hope-giving ... the whole
idea of reform on a
grassroots level.
- Forum participant

Budd Hall, Chair of UVic's **Office for Community-based Research** moderated the public forum. **Dogwood Initiative** Executive Director **Will Horter** opened with the hopeful imperative. Citing climate change as the priority peril humanity faces, Horter talked about our hunger for non-partisan information and new ideas and effective actions at the local level: *"We are at a point of significant citizen shift ... individuals are re-evaluating our (consumption) needs and our personal responsibilities. Big ideas like Saanich Civic League may be essential to our survival."*

During the forum Q&A, people expressed particular interest in the Guelph league's **Council Voting Record** – a non-partisan



Thank you for organizing one of the largest non-partisan forums that I have seen outside of an actual election. Please put me on your mailing list.
– Victoria forum participant

report card showing how each councilor voted on council motions related to citizen-expressed values. Nine of thirteen Guelph councilors lost their seats in the 2006 election; twelve of the thirteen elected espoused the GCL's 10 Guiding Values - values the GCL established by surveying citizens about what they wanted for their city. Guelph voter turnout increased from 36% to 40% in 2006.

In forum closing comments, **Saanich Civic League** chair Sher Morgan led a Who's in the Room poll of hands raised by municipality. A good-natured competition ensued as attendees vied for best municipal representation. An estimated 45 percent of forum-goers were Victoria residents (just 26% of Victoria voters voted municipally in 2005) Thirty percent at Thursday's forum were Saanich residents (where only 19% voted in 2005), and the balance came from Oak Bay, Esquimalt, Langford, North Saanich, Central Saanich, Sidney, View Royal, Metchosin, Highlands, Sooke, and the Juan de Fuca Electoral Area.



From Paralysis to Action

Engaging our Neighbours in a New Kind of Politics

was presented by Saanich Civic League, Victoria Labour Council, Columbia Institute on Civic Governance, Patti Stockton Queenswood Consulting, Dogwood Initiative.

Times-Colonist Thumbs Up for SCL June 22, 2008

