

Transit referendum ballots are rolling in

Elections B.C. sent packages to voters by municipality, with Vancouver, Surrey getting them first

BY BRIAN MORTON, VANCOUVER SUN APRIL 1, 2015



Elections B.C. is beginning to receive mailed-in ballots from voters on the Metro Vancouver congestion improvement tax.

Photograph by: Ric Ernst, PNG

More than 60,000 ballots have been mailed in from the region's two largest municipalities so far in Metro Vancouver's transit plebiscite, representing about four per cent of all registered voters.

"It's early," said Elections B.C. communications manager Don Main on Wednesday. "Next week, we'll see more response from other municipalities."

Main said ballot packages on the 0.5-per-cent Metro Vancouver Congestion Improvement Tax were mailed out by municipality, and Vancouver and Surrey were the first to get them. All the ballot packages were sent over a 10-day period from March 16 to 27.

"We'll see more response or ballot packages from other municipalities next week, because they were still going out on Friday."

As of Wednesday, about 13 per cent of Vancouver's 414,589 eligible voters had returned their ballots.

In Surrey, with 294,010 eligible voters, about three per cent of ballots had been sent in.

The total number of registered voters eligible to vote in Metro Vancouver's 23 municipalities is 1,552,447.

According to Elections B.C., the number of interim ballot returns will be reported on a weekly basis and ballot counting will begin after the close of voting at 8 p.m. on May 29.

Asked how the initial results compare with the 2011 HST (harmonized sales tax) referendum, Main said it's difficult to compare because the voting window for the HST referendum was far shorter.

He noted that half the people who voted in the HST referendum did so in the final week of voting and that 52.7 per cent of registered voters cast ballots in the HST referendum.

A recent poll suggested that the No side holds a commanding lead in the transit plebiscite.

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