

north shore news

CAROLAN: A blueprint for next four years

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"Success is not final, failure is not fatal. It is the courage to continue that counts" - Winston Churchill

With the election settled we can look at North Shore civic life in terms of the next four years. The numbers help tell the tale.

Everyone complains, but who showed up to try and do something about things? The City of North Vancouver's scrappy mayoral race saw a third of its voters turn out, with the district trawling about a quarter and West Vancouver about 27 per cent. Overall, that's only about 25 per cent of North Shore voters who said they cared.

When the boss is only around for a day and a half each week, why be surprised if the staff working inside the plant start doing things their way so much of the time?

In North Vancouver city and district alike there was plenty of pre-election discontent about transit and urban growth, yet both returned all their incumbents comfortably. Those who voted clearly find the state of things acceptable locally. Who knew?

If you didn't support incumbent views, alas, now you simply have to lump it. If you didn't bother to vote at all, then you've forfeited your right to gripe about a single local government issue for the next four years, so from those who did care, this simple message: please shut up.

What have we learned from the elections? Lots. At all-candidates' meetings those in the running, incumbents especially, heard an earful from people about what's bugging them and what needs attention. That's the value of elections.

The district's two new faces on council - Matthew Bond and Jim Hanson - were elected to represent fresh ways of dealing with ongoing problems.

In the city, that falls to newcomer Holly Back.

Study the poll-by-poll results and it's evident that those elected secured their support fairly uniformly across their municipality. This indicates we didn't see one sector or populous voting area dominate in electing a local hero. As my computer analyst wife notes, what was also striking is how uncannily accurate the advance and mail-in polls were in predicting exactly who would be elected. Who are these sages that can pick mayors and councils before heading off to sunnier climes or out of town business appointments? Can't marketing people in 2018 locate these voters early and spare the rest of us fallible mortals the usual election agony that follows?

As for election night media coverage of the liveliest municipal elections across the Lower Mainland in a generation, what can one say? Abysmal.

Television scarcely bothered. Except for Shaw Cable's digitized and slowto-arrive race results, all we were offered was the usual Saturday night hokum.

Remember when thoughtful analysts like Capilano University instructor Stan Persky and radio and political veteran Rafe Mair used to give us terrific local civic coverage via Shaw Cable? At least News 1130 put real effort into its radio waves coverage.

The lack of civility we witnessed in a number of key races in Metro Vancouver and in a few spots on the North Shore

remains a matter of concern. U.S.-style negative attack tactics did little to enlighten us and probably turned off even more voters than normal from the democratic process. The encroaching reach of provincial parties into local municipal contests is involved in this.

Meanwhile, across the moat Vancouver's mayoral challenger Kirk LaPointe stands out as a most likeable candidate not to succeed, although the two North Vancouvers had their fair share too. You can argue about big city policies, but even centre-left and veteran lefty supporters had issues with incumbent Gregor Robertson.

Over-40 readers will remember when "issues" were known as problems, and in Vancouver the Vision bunch have problems. There's a reason why Adriane Carr topped the polls as a Green Party rep for councillor. Voters there know that she actually turns up at important community events and she dares to listen. There's probably a message in that for mayors and councils throughout the region.

Now we've got a new chapter ahead and new opportunities to get things right. Congratulations to all the elected and thanks and good luck to all those who were willing to stand up and try to make a difference. We'd surely be a darker place without you.

The burden of election is often a worrisome job. I'm hopeful that our North Shore mayors and councils will do more than just listen these next four years and genuinely start hearing the concerns of younger people especially. They know that there are some things which aren't right in the world, but are unsure of the best ways to register their concern. Effective leaders reach out and work to lift them up into the system.

As a set of marching orders it's either Robert Kennedy or maybe the Book of Luke, but one of them reminds us that "to whom much has been given, much is expected." Still good advice for our elected public servants and worth living up to. For now, so is Ringo's old maxim - "Peace and Love Everybody."

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