

Traffic, development big issues for business

[Brent Richter](#) / North Shore News

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Whether it's in the council chamber, or in front of the chamber of commerce, the conversation sounds much the same.

Traffic, infrastructure and residential development were the top issues at this year's annual North Vancouver Chamber of Commerce mayors' luncheon.

Though North Shore residents often place blame for traffic on the development they see locally, their blame is often misplaced, according to district Mayor Richard Walton.

"You have to look at demographics on the North Shore to realize that people are living and working in different patterns than they did many years ago, and therefore that's impacted the traffic," he said. "Twenty years ago, 70 per cent of the traffic on the Ironworkers Memorial (in the morning) was southbound and now it's 51 per cent northbound and 49 per cent southbound because so many of our young professionals, trades and service workers are now living as far away as Langley."

The demographic of people age 20 to 40 is the one the district is hoping to woo back to the North Shore with development called for in its official community plan, Walton said. Though he faces a lot of criticism on and off council, city Mayor Darrell Mussatto said the same pressures exist all over the Lower Mainland.

"People are coming. The Lower Mainland is one of the most sought after places in the world," he said.

"There's a tremendous amount of wealth coming into the area from around the world. Expo put us on the map, the Olympics made us a world-class city and people know that.

I still remember the Omnimax film "A freedom to move" - how things have changed! - cik

"It's a very stable place to put money and one of those areas is real estate and they're doing that. Your \$1-million house on the North Shore will be \$2 million in 10 years and they're not making any more single family homes. We're going to have to accommodate that growth somehow," he added, noting the city has concentrated its growth in the form of stacked townhouses and condos along transit corridors.

In some areas a lot is already over \$2m - cjk

The problem is only going to get tougher for politicians to deal with as demand for the same limited land base grows, he warned.

"I've had a good go for 25 years but for those who come after, it's going to be even more difficult," he said.

"Is that a hint?" moderator Jon McComb asked. "Yes," Mussatto responded, deadpan.

But with growth, changes to our road infrastructure are coming, with the province, feds and district gearing up to redesign the Highway 1 interchanges leading up to the Ironworkers bridgehead. Talks and preliminary designs have been in the works for years, but only recently did the district and feds decide that replacing the Lynn Creek bridge on Highway 1 should be incorporated into the plan. That piece, however, hasn't been budgeted for. Walton said he'd just had a "good, productive" conference call with North Vancouver's two MLAs as well as North Vancouver's new Liberal MP Jonathan Wilkinson "sharing ideas and trying to find ways to facilitate" that piece of the puzzle.

Though the TransLink funding plebiscite went down to defeat in 2015, the mayors' council vision is still critical in the big

picture of moving the growing population around the Lower Mainland, Mussatto said.

"Because you can't build your way out of congestion," he said.

This is largely a myth. - cjk

On the North Shore, that included 10-minute SeaBus service, B-line linking Lynn Valley with downtown, Metrotown with Capilano University, and Phibbs Exchange with Dundarave along Marine Drive, as well as more frequent regular bus service.

That's an old mantra! - cjk

The new Liberal government in Ottawa has put up billions in funding for such projects, but Mussatto said he would not be quarterbacking any more referendums to secure municipal funding, putting that task back to the TransLink board.

And, Mussatto said, Wilkinson has also been very receptive in conversations about the most expensive piece of infrastructure that does not yet have the feds committing to fund their share of the project: \$700-million Lions Gate Wastewater Treatment plant. Construction must start this year if it is to be online by the 2020 deadline imposed by the previous Conservative government, although the feds never committed funding to the project.

"Unfortunately, sewage is not sexy and sewage is not one of those ones politicians love to cut ribbons on because it's not a real big vote-getter," Mussatto said.

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