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Election expenses under review

Campaign finance documents showing new numbers

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Council candidates from the 2014 municipal elections, including City of North Vancouver Mayor Darrell Mussatto, are having to check their math.

Elections BC has been reviewing the campaign finance disclosure statements filed by the more than 3,600 candidates who ran for mayor, council and school board in the province last year — the first time the agency has had that responsibility.

The initial campaign finance disclosure forms showed Mussatto accepted \$91,394.79 in donations but spent only \$74,051.24, raising questions about where the rest of the money was. An amended expense form filed last month shows \$99,034.75 in both donations and expenses, including another \$7,639.10 donation from Coun. Craig Keating.

"I disclosed that I had received a donation but I hadn't put it on my expense side so it made it look like I had money," Mussatto said. "The people at Elections BC have been very helpful. They totally understood my situation and empathized. They said these are very complex documents and it's a lot of accounting you have to learn how to do."

Further muddying the waters was the fact the mayor shared campaign expenses and donations with six other candidates, including Keating and Couns. Linda Buchanan and Holly Back. Much of their shared contributions came in the form of donated staff time from K&T Properties to work in a campaign phone bank supporting Mussatto and his allies.

Mussatto has been facing backlash for the donation on and off council as K&T's affiliate Playtime Gaming is currently petitioning the city to overturn its ban on commercial gambling. Mussatto said he never had any discussions with the company before they contributed staff to his phone bank. Instead, the donation likely came because of his stance on

gaming over his many terms on council, Mussatto said.

“This is not the first time we’ve had gaming come to us. We have had it over the last 20 years. It’s been here since the lotteries started in B.C. and I’ve shown a willingness to be open minded on it. That’s my position,” he said. “I’m not dead against it. I’m not dead for it. I feel very free to saying yes or no to moving forward on this and I have no qualms with it.”

Coun. Rod Clark has also filed an updated form, showing an extra \$631.79 contribution from himself to his own campaign to square the final income and expenditures.

Elections BC staff have reviewed about 35 per cent of the more than 3,600 disclosure forms filed from the 2014 election, according to Elections BC spokesman Don Main, and so far, the majority of which required some degree of amendment after the fact.

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