

north shore news

North Shore transit ballots roll in as deadline looms

Between 24 and 33 per cent of North Vancouver and West Vancouver voters have cast ballots

Tereza Verenca / North Shore News

May 8, 2015 12:00 AM



File photo Dreamstime

Between 24 and 33 per cent of North Shore voters have returned their transit plebiscite ballot to Elections B.C.

As of Wednesday, of the roughly 34,300 registered voters in the City of North Vancouver, 33 per cent have said Yes or No to the proposed tax hike, while its neighbouring districts fared lower. Of the 60,600 eligible voters in the District of North Vancouver, 29 per cent have cast a ballot, while participation for West Vancouver sits at 24 per cent.

The non-binding vote asks Metro Vancouver residents whether or not they approve a 0.5 per cent increase in the provincial sales tax (roughly \$125 a year/household). The money raised would fund the mayors' transportation and transit plan, which would include building a subway along the Broadway corridor and the introduction of light rail in Surrey.

Despite being a strong proponent for the No side, West Vancouver Mayor Mike Smith told the North Shore News he's surprised by the low voter turnout in his district.

He said he's "still on the side of the common sense" and that giving TransLink more money is the wrong decision.

"You don't have the right to put public money into an organization until you have the right business model for success. Obviously, we don't have that because nobody's in charge of TransLink," Smith explained of the often criticized corporation. "How is building light rail in Surrey or a Broadway subway line helping congestion problems on the North Shore?"

Smith's hope is that if the No side prevails, stakeholders like the mayors and the provincial government, will have to sit down and come up with a new business model.

Unlike Smith, the City of North Vancouver's mayor is pleased with voter turnout in his municipality, calling it "quite phenomenal."

"I think it means more people are becoming aware of the (plebiscite), and they're probably wanting to have their voices heard," said Darrell Mussatto. "It's really polarizing, though — some people are really upset about it."

A proponent of the Yes side, Mussatto called the vote a "critical defining moment" for the region.

"If it's a No, I have no idea how we're going to manage the transit congestion in the region."

Latest figures show Elections B.C. has received more than 600,000 ballots, about 38 per cent of the 1.56 million voting packages mailed out to Metro Vancouver voters since March 16.

The deadline to request a voting package is May 15 while the deadline to submit the ballot is May 29.

© 2015 North Shore News