

north shore news

Europe's troubling seismic shakes

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October 26, 2014 12:00 AM

A working visit to Europe makes an interesting prelude to our local North Shore elections.

What happens in Europe still affects us in North America, and economically and politically there are worrisome signs on the horizon.

England's internal debate regarding European Union and immigration issues is now critical. The just-in byelection victory for UKIP, the UK Independence Party led by Nigel Farage, has been a dagger in Conservative PM David Cameron's back. Now the hard right have a leader who can finally carve off support both from middle class and labour voter, seniors, and the rapidly growing section of Britain's disenfranchised young.

In France where I pursued film projects, the socialists under Francois Hollande are driving a generation of entrepreneurs into tax exile. Hollande, known as "Flamby" or Custard Belly, with a mere 13 per cent popular support has brought in punitive taxes on wealth creators. The result? Legions of differencemakers have already left France and now live in Brussels, London, or Switzerland. The country is

floundering economically and structurally. Italy, Europe's third largest economy, is also back on the ropes. Germany is trying to figure out its own best course while having to deal - like everyone else - with hawkish Mr. Putin in Russia.

The disastrous Ukraine crisis is adding to the fire. The West's economic sanctions were designed to clamp down on the Russian people. But the Russian people know how to suffer. Putin's reverse ban on imports from the European and NAT O communities is kicking in and food-exporting nations like Denmark, Ireland and Norway are experiencing huge economic reverses. The neo-Nazis in the Ukraine we hear so little of in North America are serious news here. Putin won't tolerate them.

Sooner or later, all of this backs up to Fortress North America. When the worst of it hits, our exhaust systems had better be ready. Mark Carney, our former economic guru, is a constant figure in UK and European news reports.

In France, the 100th anniversary of the First World War drew me to pay homage at Vimy Ridge and the battlefields where my grandfather suffered terrible wounds at the Somme. Our national Canadian Vimy memorial is magnificent and tragic beyond words. There are many monuments here, but nothing like the heartbreak of the Canadian site. It has become a modern pilgrimage site.

Meanwhile, locally it's all municipal elections. West Vancouver always feels like an inside job led by the geriatric "brat-frat" mob.

But do we have the kind of candidates we need in **North Vancouver**? In the district, Richard Walton returns unchallenged as mayor. **Administratively, expect more of the same at the top.**

For council it's a grabbag. I'm puzzled by some of the names that come forward without having drawn much previous attention through appearances before council, neighbourhood association volunteering, community service and so on. My question to those without this is "why bother?" Otherwise, it simply looks as if someone is trolling for a job. There's been a longtime expectation in North Vancouver, city and district, that first you get dusty in the fray of general municipal life, then step forward with experience. My advice is to scan the candidates on the web - there's not a lot to get excited about - then attend

the all-candidates meetings.

The district has two open seats where incumbents aren't running, the most in years; that means some new faces.

I've said before that, on hard evidence, **Jim Hanson deserves to be elected. District council needs a compassionate guy like him instead of the familiar property development lackeys.**

Two other candidates, Kevin Macauley and Wayne Hunter, have run unsuccessfully before, but this means they have campaign experience, which is useful. I've heard Hunter rant on behalf of the oil and gas industries, and his style can be bombastic. With public concern about Kinder Morgan expansion close by, will there be concern about allying the district with the big energy lobbies?

Oddly, the district used to want strong female representation on council. For the past few years Lisa Muri has held the fort solo here. There are other new options this election, but lack of name recognition will likely be a factor.

District voter issues are solidly about residential densification and related transportation and traffic congestion woes.

Across the municipality and in the city, other attractor issues are bike lanes, constantly rising taxes, amalgamation and sidewalks. Here's your chance to do something: **ask candidates "Will you fight for low-growth as a strategy?"** Lack of affordable housing, senior government downloading of costs, skyrocketing staff salaries and benefits versus those paid in the real world, and adherence to official community plan guidelines - all are simmering and require attention.

City voters have 13 new faces to consider with one slot open on council. Rod Clark and Pam Bookham have been reliable dissenters against big growth. Don Bell will likely top the polls. In a three-way tussle, Darrell Mussatto should be re-electable as mayor.

In West Vancouver, Coun. Nora Gambioli has shown some creativity and initiative.

Meanwhile, elections and administrations come and go. What remains fascinating, apparently, is Britain's Royal Family. At the international Mipcom television festival in Cannes this week, the buzz was all about The Royals, a big new Lionsgate series starring Liz Hurley. The 49-year-old plays Queen Helena, a modern ruler based on what might have happened if Lady Di had survived to share the throne. Hurley's appearance in Nice had the French gobsmacked.

See you at the District of North Vancouver allcandidates meeting Nov. 4, at the Capilano Library, 6:30 p.m. sponsored by the Delbrook Community Association.

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