

**Subject: Qualifications and personal qualities required in municipal candidates**

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**To:** Corrie Kost <kost@triumf.ca>,

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**Dear FONVCA members and citizens of North Vancouver District:**

**The material below was prepared in response to a recent request from a citizen for suggestions as to what qualifications and personal qualities are desirable in a good candidate for the November 2002 Municipal Elections in the District of North Vancouver. There is no doubt that readers will be able to add many more suggestions of their own, but this is a start to stimulate discussion....**

### **Ethics, Integrity and Vision**

**These qualities top our list - Without them, District citizens won't get anything else**

After that, a candidate should have or be.....

- **A determination to be accountable** - personally and professionally, to the citizens of the District. This should be coupled with a recognition that accountability from their politicians is the *entitlement* of all citizens of the community; it's not a *privilege* to be handed down sparingly 'from above'. Council members should recognize that they are normal human beings, not much different than the rest of us, and that they have merely been hired by a 'jury of their peers' as the best of those who *applied* for the job and that it is only by their diligence and actions that they can demonstrate whether, in fact, they were **the** best.
- **Competence** - Given the above qualities in place, we think voters would prefer candidates who have a demonstrated expertise in some field useful to the work they do for Council - fiscal management, planning, *staff management*, come to mind - although surely there's a better word than management?

In addition, given the record of this and earlier councils, we are convinced that at least one member of council should have legal expertise. Times without number former BC Attorney-General and West Vancouver councillor, Allan Williams has pointed out the need for some changes required in West Vancouver municipal agreements, or some risk to that municipality should council take a given action. Had he been faced with the 'road to nowhere' situation, for example, we'd wager the District would not have been hoist on a \$15,000 per month loss! At the very least, the District bill for legal services should be smaller!

- **A community-sensitive attitude to Business and Development:** Our guess is that most District citizens like their community roughly the way it is, with little or low growth, lots of parks and trees and a focus on recreation and tourism rather than heavy industry. That said, industry and developers have a right to do business. So, bearing that in mind, it would be great to conduct candidate recruitment for *community-sensitive* business and/or developer-types to sit on council. by that means, citizens could benefit from those with business or development expertise but who would not, at the same time, *rape* the community with undedicating park/green space, polluting industry or DVP's coming out of the 'ying yang'.
- **Fiscally-wise, sensitive and accountable:** The District desperately needs some mayoralty and councillor candidates who understand the budget process. In addition, the other members of council should be able to read/evaluate a financial statement. If that takes some instruction at the beginning of the next term, that's understandable. However, when it takes a citizen to explain to a councillor - and professional staff - that when Council takes money out of an interest-bearing account the District loses the interest that money could have earned, then the voters are in trouble!

*In fact, what we would like to see is a majority of candidates who are prepared to vote in favour of a complete, independent, external fiscal and process audit by someone from well outside of the District; a firm which would not be tempted to pull any punches in the hope or expectation of gaining further business from the District.*

- **Knowledge of District issues and their history:** This goes without saying - what citizens do not need are opportunist candidates who want the job but, otherwise, don't know which end is up. Once elected, members of council need to be able to hit the ground running, if the problems in the District - which have been created over several council terms - are to be turned around. In today's municipal world, it's no longer acceptable for a new candidate to sit back and take a third or more of their term learning on the job. This does **not** mean that we think all members of the current council should be re-elected just because they know the issues - far from it.
- **Engineering experience:** That would be most helpful in view of the fact that Parks, Engineering and Planning take up the lion's share of the District budget - *provided* that they are of the knowledgeable and 'take charge' type, able to guide/direct staff, rather than just follow along behind the bureaucracy.

We would strongly recommend candidates who see the value of splitting up that department again, and who would be willing to consider the wisdom of the KPMG recommendation that the person chosen to head up the department should be sought from *outside* the District. Again, we see a serious need for fresh minds to bring a community vision to bear on blowing out entrenched cobwebs. Just because "we've always done it this way" doesn't mean that it's the *best* way.

- **Abuse of Power:** In view of the relatively unknown quantity of the new Community Charter, and the effects it might have on municipal operations and budgets, the District needs a new council that would not engage in *abuse of [the new] power*. Public-Private Partnerships may well be needed and an inevitable fiscal reality, but citizens want *sensitive* P3's - and not, for example, billboards polluting the District.

Further, with respect to 'need', we believe that council would do well to go back to its roots, and examine the reasons why municipalities were formed in the first place. If it were to do that, it would find that its major emphasis should be on planning, infrastructure - including transportation - zoning and by-laws - virtually to the exclusion of everything else. We do not buy into the idea that, because the federal and provincial governments are abdicating their responsibilities in health care, social programs, education and the arts, municipalities should take up the slack in all these areas. Libraries, recreation, art galleries maybe, but little else.....AND, within reason, we should adopt a pay-as-you-go policy. Citizens *must* be made to realize that, if they want services and amenities, then someone is going to have to pay for them - preferably, it should, to a large extent, be the users. [It is recognized that a candidate may find that difficult to say *before* the election]

**In closing, there are four issues which we feel must take priority billing on the agendas of the new District Council:**

- **FISCAL HEALTH and MANAGEMENT in the DISTRICT OF NORTH VANCOUVER**
- **TRANSPORTATION**
- **GVRD REPRESENTATION AND MANDATE**
- **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

**We want to know where all the candidates stand on every single one of these issues.**

**In particular, we want candidates who have made themselves thoroughly familiar with the District**

**budgets and issues for at least the past three years, and to have a clear understanding of where and how they "want to go on from here".**

**Candidates should have taken the time to become familiar with transportation options/costs/revenue/ridership figures and issues - not just for the North Shore but, also, throughout the GVRD because District citizens are 'on the hook' for a massive transportation bill which, already, amounts to billions of dollars.**

**Candidates must have made themselves aware of the original mandate of of the GVRD, and the way in which that mandate has ballooned - not by a democratic vote, by consensus or by provincial edict, but by the GVRD 'taking unto itself' ever-expanding jurisdictions. We want to see candidates who are prepared to 'rein-in' this type of expansion, to re-evaluate the whole GVRD participation process and who have the courage to amend it where necessary.**

**Last but not least, we believe the District needs to elect candidates who believe in the rights of the public: to ask reasonable questions; to receive a timely and respectful answer; and, to participate in governance via [worthwhile] advisory committees.**

We would be happy to hear all of your comments - for and against - and to hear the suggestions you would like to see added.

Signed: Liz James, Chair

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