

MEET THE CANDIDATES

North Vancouver Chamber – Questions for Candidates – Municipal Election 2022



Don Bell

Councillor Candidate – City of North Vancouver

Don has lived North Vancouver 53 years, the last 16 years in Central Lonsdale. He has extensive business, community and local political experience. He owned a small retail business in North Vancouver and for 13 years was Public Affairs Director at Canada Safeway. Don has served as CNV Councillor since 2011, previously as Member of Parliament, DNV Mayor and Councillor, North Vancouver School Board Chair and Trustee, and GVRD Vice-Chair and Director. Don's current Committees include: North Vancouver Museum & Archives Commission, North Shore Advisory Committee on Disability Issues, Park & Tilford Gardens Management Board, and Metro Vancouver Water Committee.

Investment in Public Transit

Q1: If elected, what will you do to advance local, provincial and federal government commitments to transit infrastructure investments to, from and across North Vancouver?

The INSTPP (Integrated North Shore Transportation Planning Project) finally convinced senior governments, including TransLink, that the North Shore has had and still has a serious transportation problem. According to Translink, BRT (Bus Rapid Transit) is coming, likely within 5 years, but in the short term we need increased bus service and SeaBus service. Translink has indicated that they will not be taking on any new initiatives for the next three years. I will advocate for a joint campaign by the three North Shore municipalities to keep the pressure on Translink to make North Shore Transit a priority. I have argued, and will continue to argue for bringing the bus depot for our North Vancouver buses back to the North Shore from Burnaby to be located in the soon to be vacated lot adjacent to the existing West Van Bus Depot located on Lloyd Ave in the District of North Van.

Access to Primary Health Care

Q2: If elected, what will you do, in the short and long term, to support better access to primary physical and mental health care (doctors, dentists, etc.) in North Vancouver?

I will continue to support creation of a medical hub approach near Lions Gate Hospital and the provision of adequate office space for medical offices. Unfortunately, the residential/commercial redevelopment of the former medical offices towers in the south side of the 100 block of East 13th allowed for a significant reduction in medical office space, which is one of the reasons I spoke and voted against it. I have supported, and will continue to support the expansion of facilities at Lions Gate Hospital.



Rising Costs / Property Taxes

Q3 – Many businesses continue to feel the impact of the pandemic and need support to navigate the current environment, in particular seeking help to reduce their costs and to increase the pool of skilled workers from which to hire and train. If elected, what will you do to help reduce the burden of costs on business? What policies or programs will you introduce to reduce cost pressures and make North Vancouver a more tax-competitive jurisdiction for businesses?

Small business is a major source of jobs, needed services and products. Rising land values, high rent and COVID have threatened their survival. I support fair property taxes for small business and oppose the unfair way empty air space above many small businesses is appraised for taxation. I support help for restaurants and food outlets during COVID. Wider, improved sidewalks and street landscapes are intended to attract more shoppers to areas like Lower and Central Lonsdale. I support BIA business associations. During consideration of this year's tax allocation I argued, unsuccessfully, for Council to again shift some of the tax burden away from businesses due to the unusual financial viability challenges businesses faced because of the COVID pandemic. As a former business owner, I know how important all businesses are for our community. The city needs to continue with the roundtable discussions we started during the pandemic, so that we understand the unique and evolving needs of business owners and their staff. I am committed to doing all I can to help our local businesses. That means listening to their concerns, working with them, and doing everything possible to support them, so they continue to thrive.

Availability of Affordable Housing

Q4– Local governments play a central role in housing. If elected, what will you do to accelerate investments to increase the availability of affordable housing options for people and employees who live and work in North Vancouver?

The housing crisis is national, provincial and at the local level. The costs to address it are enormous and senior levels of government must play a key funding role. Many city workers cannot afford to live on the North Shore and must choose to live in other Lower Mainland areas which adds to our commuting, traffic and parking problems. We must encourage older, purpose-built rental buildings owners to maintain what currently provides true affordable housing for many residents. We must also prioritize new rental, non-profit and co-op housing, and rent-to-own options compared to encouraging more expensive condos.

Local Government services – Support for Businesses

Q5 – A municipal government’s processes can greatly affect the economics of doing business. If elected, what will you do to support more efficient transactions and timelines in support of businesses in North Vancouver?

Time is money. I have supported the City of North Van’s attempts to speed up the simplification and processing of business-related forms, applications and approvals. The introduction of the Gateway Counters in our City Hall help simplify business applications by centralizing the process for applicants to one entry point. Also, I support moving to more on-line submissions and processing to speed processing times. The COVID pandemic and impacts on City staffing have added delays in services and hopefully these will continue to be steadily improved.

