

MEET THE CANDIDATES

North Vancouver Chamber – Questions for Candidates – Municipal Election 2022



Max Lai

Councillor Candidate - City of North Vancouver

Born and raised in North Vancouver, the North Shore is my home. I graduated from Handsworth Secondary in 2012, I studied at SFU and graduated with a B.A. in political science. I have been a lifeguard/instructor close to ten years as teaching and swimming are passions of mine. When it comes to political experience, this is my first time running although I have volunteered at the federal level as a research analyst for NDP Candidate Justine Bell (2019) and Tammy Bentz (2021). As for community experience, I served on the Community Service Advisory Committee (2019-2021) for the District of North Vancouver to learn about quality of life concerns and assisting non-profits within the community. In the City of North Vancouver, I serve on the Integrated Transportation Committee (2020-present) to develop an understanding of current policy and the effects of new development on traffic flow.

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?

To manage our traffic and congestion, council needs a proactive policy mindset to plan our current and future infrastructure needs. Planning for and around our current obstacles is the best step forward to deal with traffic needs as our current policy should not deal with traffic needs only when it becomes prevalent. We can start tackling this issue by creating a 'Traffic Needs' study, a yearly report giving current deliverable actions, and anticipating future travel needs. Council should look to diversify travel options as transportation alternatives need to be either equally or significantly beneficial and competitive against driving. Transit policy changes need to be more vocalized by council which shows studies that look at a diverse range of options, but we also need to back up what we are claiming as well. Since the current mayor and council have ensured "Rapid Transit" within the next 5 years, I will be vocal in;

- Ensuring the groundwork finds the best rapid transit system that would alleviate and capture our communities' transit needs.
- Lay the infrastructure groundwork to ensure the rapid transit system chosen can be implemented as soon as possible.

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 know that the City is currently creating a Community Wellbeing Strategy with the strategy overview to be “A City where everyone belongs” which is to help “progress health, happiness, potential and quality of life for everyone” (This can be found at <https://www.cnv.org/city-services/planning-and-policies/community-wellbeing>) While I agree with the direction of the strategy, what I would like to bring is that our goals and strategies are measurable, actionable, and achievable. I understand that change does not come with a snap of a finger, but I want to ensure that Council can be held accountable when we create these plans and strategies. I would advocate that within Community Wellbeing Strategy that we have set bars for what we want to see in the next four, eight, and even twelve years into our future. These ‘hard’ measurable allow our community to keep Council accountable rather than broad, abstract ideas which are much harder to uphold our Council. For too long, I have read and seen many strategies that cannot be measurable and this kind of accountability shows our community that we are serious about our local health care.

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?

A sustainable economic development plan will always have policies that communicate and develop our local Business Community, thus I believe that Council should continuously enhance communication and transparency towards our business community. I think the first thing that needs to happen is an update of the City’s Economic Development Strategy as its adoption in 2008 means that there should be some form of an update to see what the City has done well and what things still need improvement. Updates can be made to Strategies such as the Long Term Property Tax Strategy to maintain the balance of our buffer lands for better residential quality of life while protecting our industrial lands so that they are used for that purpose. Additionally, I would vocalize to create a Business Retention and Expansion Program as my passion for research data means that the information collected allows a clearer focus on what business needs currently are. I would also be supportive of the Central Lonsdale BIA that is coming on in, and if possible, to find more areas that would be suitable to be upgraded as a BIA if it is both practicable and economical for everyone.

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?

To target this issue, a defining guideline on what is ‘affordable housing’ needs to be created so policy changes can be made. How should we define affordable housing? When an individual household spends less than 30% of their income on appropriate shelter accommodations. This definition creates an overarching guideline that tackles the questions of:

- WHO we are building for?
- WHAT we are building for?

It is under the council’s purview to ensure adequate, affordable housing inventory for all. That is why I am committed to bringing in ideas such as;

- Gentle densification (Defined by me as Creating avenues to transition single-family homes into multi-family lots without losing the essence of the neighborhood) with incentives to allow homeowners on single-family plots to create more multi-generational or multi-plex housing.
- Expanding our mid-market rental policy to encompass either more units or have the rental rates on the units further decreased (Less is More policy)
- Creating programs such as Rent-to-Own (Work in tandem with B.C.’s Affordable Home Ownership Program) to Affordable Workforce Housing Policy that targets between 80 to 200 Percent of the Average Median Income.

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?

Communication in governance is key, it is why I strive to be the transparent interface between the community that we represent and the policymakers that look to improve and make our community better. To ensure this open communicational loop and similar to my answer to Question 3, I do believe that a Business Retention and Expansion Program is needed to give us, the councilor, as much information to be as informed or over-informed as we can be when we are making decisions to help support businesses. Furthermore, with my time speaking with NV Chamber CEO Patrick Stafford-Smith, I will advocate streamlining the process of getting a business license. What areas within getting the permits and licenses are seen to be redundant or complicated which needs to be simplified is a two-way conversation that can be easily created with a BRE Program. I would also advocate helping find ways to keep the principles of getting a business license which are;

- Ensuring timeliness of getting a license
- Ensuring Efficiency to get a license
- To keep the license strictly for cost-recovery

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