



MEDIA STATEMENT

Neighbourhoods for a Sustainable Vancouver (NSV) issues post-election statement: Significant Achievements in 2011 Civic Election

(Vancouver, Nov. 24, 2011) Randy Helten, mayoral candidate in the 2011 Vancouver civic election, commented today on the election outcome: "We at **Neighbourhoods for a Sustainable Vancouver** thank all who supported us. Considering the odds against NSV, we made significant achievements. I came in third as mayoral candidate in a field of 12, and our Council candidates all broke into the same order of magnitude as the top ten elected. We are proud that we brought to the forefront of public debate the serious problem of election campaigns being funded by interests that officials are supposed to regulate, and the need to restore meaningful public involvement in decision making at City Hall and in our neighbourhoods. NSV will continue to help and encourage neighbourhoods to make their voices heard at City Hall and to promote grassroots city-wide networking for strong and inclusive communities."

We will announce future plans soon. Below are our observations and comments on this election and its outcomes.

Appreciation, and Issues Moving Forward

1. Mayoral candidate Randy Helten and City Council candidates Nicole Benson, Marie Kerchum, Terry Martin, and Elizabeth Murphy thank our volunteers and tens of thousands of voters for their support.
2. NSV will continue to work for real democracy in Vancouver, and for economic, social, and ecological sustainability. We will promote better neighbourhood representation, and continue to address affordable housing, homelessness, development and zoning policy, livability and urban design, services and amenities, transportation, specifications for Metro Vancouver's Regional Growth Strategy, and related areas of interest and concern to Vancouver residents.

Voting Results

3. Randy Helten placed third in the mayoral race, after incumbent Gregor Robertson (Vision Vancouver) and challenger Suzanne Anton (Non-Partisan Association). The votes he received (4,007 versus 77,005 for Robertson and 58,152 for Anton) appear to have been diminished by supporters of the two traditional parties who were convinced to choose a "lesser evil."
4. Our four candidates placed well (19,644 for Murphy, 17,893 for Benson, 13,025 for Martin, and 12,613 for Kerchum), considering our rapid emergence, limited resources, short time frame, and lack of mainstream media coverage.
5. Election turnout, though slightly improved over 2008, still stood quite low at just over 34% of eligible voters. This election's increase may be attributable in part to the real alternative offered by NSV.
6. We congratulate **Adriane Carr and the Green Party of Vancouver** for their historic success in securing a seat on Council, and look forward to working to create a better city with her, the two newly-elected NPA Councillors, and the Mayor and seven Vision Vancouver Councillors.
7. The failure of the **Coalition of Progressive Electors (COPE)** to elect candidates to Council points first of all to the gap in votes for Vision Vancouver versus COPE (59,125 versus 43,846 votes), which had entered a cooperation agreement. The gap suggests that the Vision-COPE relationship was not mutual: while most COPE supporters probably voted for Vision, many Vision voters apparently failed to vote for COPE. Whether this was due mainly to lack of funds or other reasons is for COPE to ponder. The values for which COPE stands are crucial to a just and sustainable city and planet. We congratulate Allan Wong (School Board) and look forward to working constructively with COPE in the future. We can dismiss the illogical notion that NSV may have "taken" votes away from COPE, because NSV enthusiastically recommended the entire COPE slate for Council.
8. Besides recommending COPE candidates **R J Aquino, Tim Louis and Ellen Woodsworth**, NSV also recommended Green candidate (Adriane Carr), NPA "**maverick**" **Bill McCreery**, and **independent Sandy**



Garossino, who ran excellent campaigns despite limited resources.

9. We also commend all others who ran for public office, including **Lauren Gill** and **Aaron Spires (Rent Is Crazy High, or R.I.C.H.)**, and **Chris Shaw, Ian Gregson, and Chris Masson (De-Growth Vancouver)**, who helped to make the public more aware about the plight of low-income residents and the problem of unsustainable growth and consumption.

Significant Achievement Despite Limited Exposure

10. NSV achieved significant results given that our \$40,000 budget was about 1% of Vision and NPA budgets, and 10% of COPE's, the fact that our campaign was only five weeks long, that Randy Helten was not invited to participate in the mayoral debates, and the fact that we received very limited coverage in mainstream media. Vancouver residents who learned about NSV did so primarily through word of mouth, all-candidates meetings, and independent electronic and social media.
11. News reports suggest that NPA and Vision campaign budgets may have been between \$2.5 million and \$5 million for each party. Vision Vancouver may have spent \$5 to \$10 per vote, while NSV spent less than \$0.60 per vote.
12. Many political commentators reflecting interests of the development industry received extensive media coverage. The public faced an unprecedented barrage of phone calls, paid advertising, and on-the-street promotions from both Vision Vancouver and the NPA.
13. The NSV achievement offers significant evidence that many are disenchanted with both of the dominant parties.
14. Vision Vancouver appears to have violated the Vancouver Charter with election signs placed prominently less than 100 meters from a Voting Place (City Hall). As of November 24, we still await a satisfactory response from the City Clerk and Chief Election Officer.

Message to Vision Vancouver: Proceed with Caution

15. Vision Vancouver again operates with an absolute majority by controlling 8 of 11 votes on Council. Even so, they must exercise caution in future decision-making and implementation of policies. Mayor Robertson only earned the votes of 18% of registered voters, and Vision Vancouver candidates obtained support from an average of only 14%. Vision's influence on Council despite such limited support poses a serious problem for honest representation.
16. Vision Vancouver now operates with large obligations to campaign contributors who represent the development industry, unions, and other special-interests. Vision Vancouver needs to demonstrate far greater transparency and accountability in this coming term to show that City Council gives due consideration to the interests of all Vancouver stakeholders.
17. Regulators should never be funded by those they regulate. Systemic conflicts of interest cripple the ability of elected officials to make fair and balanced decisions. For example, the undue influence of the development industry – whose overriding objective is to maximize profit – does little to produce or protect affordable housing and combat homelessness. Vancouver puts on the most expensive civic elections in Canada, and this election set a new historic record. Campaign finance reform is required. Vision Vancouver and the NPA should voluntarily adopt regulations immediately. Looking to the Provincial Government to impose regulation shows no leadership. NSV accepts donations only from individuals and screens amounts over \$100 to avoid conflicts of interest.

NSV is an elector organization based on a network of individuals in neighbourhoods all over Vancouver. For five years, the network has provided extensive policy analysis and input to City Hall regarding critical Council decisions. NSV ran five candidates for City Council in the November 19 election, including Randy Helten for Mayor; and Nicole Benson, Marie Kerchum, Terry Martin, and Elizabeth Murphy for Council.

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