

## Fixing Vision Vancouver's Democratic Deficit

by Stephen Elliott-Buckley - Sunday, November 20, 2011

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Now that Vision Vancouver has self-actualized as a political party, it's time to see if they'll now address some longstanding democratic deficits.

The complexion of the city changed markedly last night as Vision elected all its candidates, the Greens got a seat on council, the NPA increased its representation and all of COPE's candidates lost except for one school trustee.

There will be a great deal of analysis in the coming weeks and months about what happened to the Vision-COPE cooperation deal. For something that was designed to promote cooperation between two parties to get all their candidates elected, something went wrong, or right, depending on your point of view.

Unsuccessful COPE candidates ended up with around 5,000-24,000 fewer votes than Vision candidates on council, with the range of 16,000-24,000 on parks and 9,000-21,000 on school board. For an arrangement that was supposed to be mutually beneficial, something didn't translate well. It appears on the surface that up to 40% of those voting for Vision decided not to vote for COPE candidates. Why did that happen? Did Vision promote COPE candidates as much as COPE promoted Vision candidates? Let the speculation begin.

So in this new political era, Vision has no substantial opposition from anyone that isn't flagrantly right wing. That should be easy for Vision to wedge itself against radically right agendas, freeing them up to indulge in most of the rest of the political spectrum as they see fit.

So while Vision asserts itself as progressive, they only have to be left of the NPA, which is quite easy, and provides no incentive to be very progressive at all.

If they want to show progressive politics, however, they should do a few things:

1. Stop the tax shift from businesses to human beings. Leave that pandering to developers and corporations to the NPA.
2. Learn a lesson from the attempted [draconian Olympic freedom of speech by-laws](#) that so dramatically demonstrated anti-progressive tendencies. Don't stifle expression any more. See #5 below.
3. New regulations designed to explicitly permit protest have ended up dictating [absurd restrictions that undermine the Charter-sanctioned inherent right to protest](#). Start some public consultation, including with activist communities, to come up with whatever reasonable restrictions are appropriate.
4. Start discussions to implement a ward system for the 2014 election. Imagine if for federal elections we had an at-large system whereby people from all over the country could run and the top 308 were elected with no obligation for regional representation. That's what we have in

- Vancouver with the at-large system: 640,000 people with no community representation. Absurd.
5. Start a good-faith dialogue with Occupy Vancouver. Now that the NPA shrieking about Occupy has stopped being a threat, it's time to stop the posturing and truly engage with the movement. [Take a page out of Seattle city council's book](#): they endorsed the movement 100% and is starting to look at moving the city's money to credit unions. Accept that the NPA tried to make Occupy the sole election issue, but [they failed because half dozen issues resonated with voters more than Occupy](#), which led many to conclude days ago that the NPA was not going to do more than maybe increase its seat count. Much of Vision's advertised policies are supposed to be progressive and resonate with the Occupy movement. Your own legitimacy hinges on walking the talk. Use the injunction last week as a means of entering into long-range dialogue with Occupy. Seek common ground. Pursue facilitating progressive improvements to society in conjunction with the Occupy movement.

Simply, if Vision Vancouver cannot or will not walk the talk of its ideals, it will be obvious to all that the party will only go left of the NPA when it absolutely has to.

And that's not very progressive at all.