

Why Vancouver's NPA Lost Badly Today

by Stephen Elliott-Buckley - Saturday, November 15, 2008

<http://politicsrespun.org/2008/11/why-vancouvers-mpa-lost-badly-today/>

Because I like to make electoral predictions, I guessed that the NPA would elect 5 people to various councils in Vancouver. It turns out I was generous. They got 4 in, unless more official results in the coming days alter that.

This doesn't really prove that the NPA is dead. Corporate donations will keep the NPA or some future clone alive forever, regardless of the fact that the 4 NPAs elected will likely never cast a meaningful vote in the next 3 years. This is good because I'm quite tired of Ken Denike. But that's another story. Ask me over a beer at the Public Lounge some time. Even if Kennedy Stewart were right and they were totally wiped off all councils, they'd still be back, strong as ever with their corporate cash.

Here are some of the stories that made for today's COPE/Vision/Green win, in their order of significance:

Populism!

North American politics are populist right now. Obama, the rise in the federal NDP, the federal Liberals' inability to raise more funds from more people than the federal NDP, and the mobilization of people rejecting apathy to join Vision Vancouver--all these show that citizens matter. The NPA is like the federal Conservatives and Liberals: complacent, corporate-friendly parties that have never felt the need to <irony>pander</irony> to human beings for money and volunteer support, while relying on corporate cash to use the media to encourage enough voters to drink their Kool-aid.

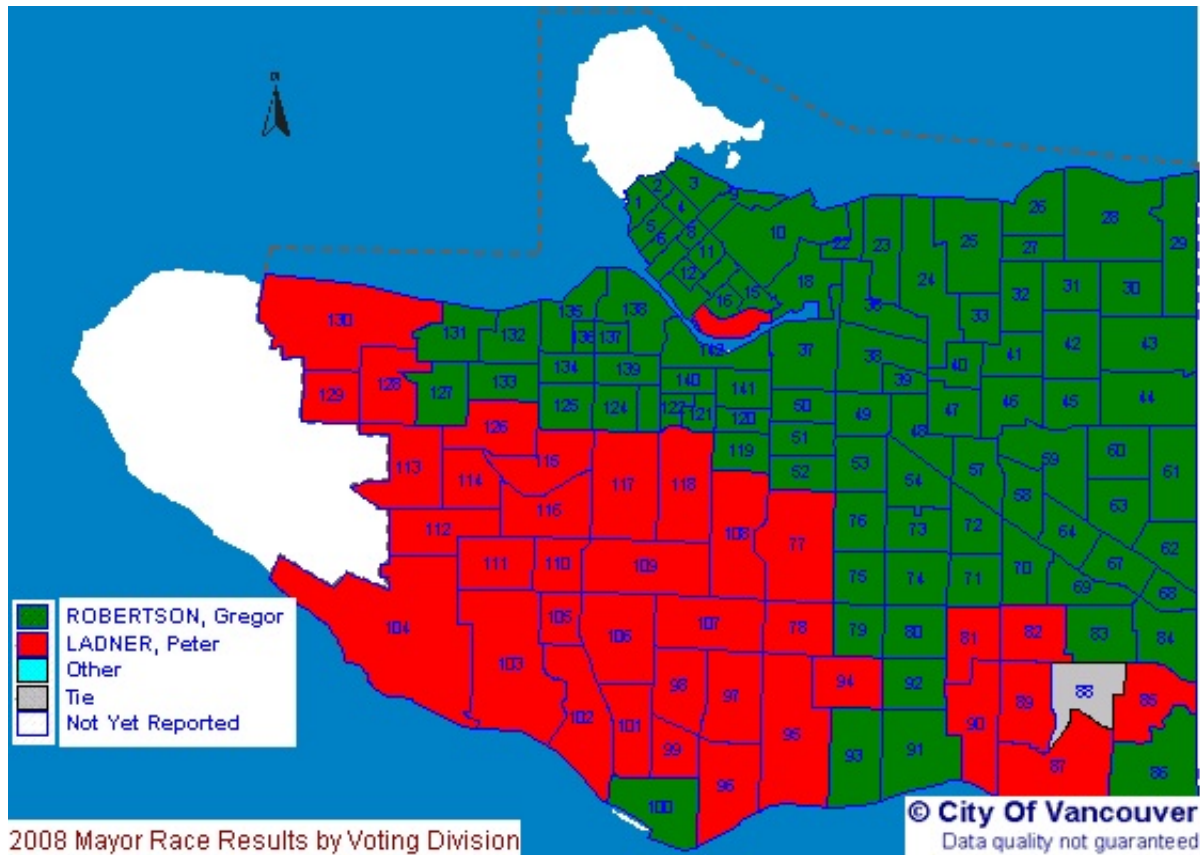
The progressive win in Vancouver is a testament to grassroots mobilization. And as much as the Republicans demeaned Obama as being a community organizer, that's exactly what got him ahead of Hillary Clinton and into the White House, and what got the NPA machine out of Vancouver city hall.

This is also why the BC Liberals' recent Whistler convention was demonizing the NDP all day, all the time: they're afraid of being tied in the polls, they're fiscal neoliberal Milton Friedman worshippers during the biggest global economic crisis in capitalism in a century, they watched Obama get elected and Harper not win a majority [despite calling the election for before the US election, knowing he'll never get a majority after Obama wins], and they know that even with the [soft fascist censorship of Bill 42](#), they are screwed because they are as unable to mobilize human beings to vote them into a third term in May as the NPA was in recent weeks. [Exhale. Sorry for the long sentence!]

The right always loses to mobilized progressives who get out the vote by shedding the apathy we're lured into by the cynical right wing. And the provincial NDP just successfully ran its third dress rehearsal for the May 2009 election [working on the federal election, the 2 Vancouver by-elections and the munis]. Obama has a database of 3 million contributors. He will not be throwing that away now that he's elected. He'll mobilize it. The NPA and the BC and federal Liberals and Conservatives will never have that. But progressives do.

Red States, Blue States

The map of mayoral votes: can you say red states, blue states?



OK, even with no guarantee of data quality and with some oversimplifications, if you know anything about the rich and poor in Vancouver, this map makes perfect sense. Where do the rich and/or conservative live? Yaletown, Point Grey, south of 16th and west of Main, the bedroom community/pseudo-suburb of southeast Vancouver. No surprise, all red for the NPA. Coal Harbour would go NPA if it weren't largely filled with empty condos owned by thousands foreigners needing a Vancouver home.

Where do the not so rich or conservative, and/or working class and/or immigrants who didn't buy their citizenship and/or young and/or single live? Everywhere else, where people outnumber the NPA voters and voted Gregor green.

The \$100 Million Olympic Village Elephant

Peter Ladner and so many others commenting on the \$100 million problem with loaning the Olympic Village development with our cash still don't get it. It's not about how certain things happen in-camera. It's not about whether councilors were fully informed before voting. It's not about the privacy of businesses. "It's the economy, stupid!"

Here's how. Stephen Harper's sweater vest didn't save him from demonstrating how out of touch he is with most Canadians when he said the global economic meltdown is a good time to invest in some

bargains in the stock market. Heck, even the CanWest toxic waste machine is laying off 560 workers in part because of the global meltdown and their share price dropping 90% this year. They're sure a bargain, but the better bargain will be in watching them implode so that we can dilute the corporate concentration of media in Vancouver and Canada with more competition and less autocratic control of news...and, frankly, better jobs for the journalists forced to work for the Aspers.

But the \$100 million problem is about how the International Olympic Committee and VANOC are not transparent organizations. They are secret, above democracy, and the IOC is even above countries. They're designed to be unaccountable to us even though they are spending billions of dollars of our tax money while people die in the streets and on surgery waiting lists. Shameful.

Ladner is so out of touch: ["It's completely irresponsible and ridiculous to think that we could do all this in public and still protect the taxpayer...Why would the Olympics be different? The scope is bigger but the framework of the deal is the same. The city does this stuff all the time — it has done this for years."](#) But when you mix this repulsion with the secrecy of the Olympics oligarchy, you get one pissed off electorate. Whoops.

And he doesn't even get the irony about how little the taxpayer is being protected in any of this Olympics deal anyway. The solution would have been to explain how in-camera works, then come out and say that when it's out of in-camera, they'll explain to people all the details. No, wait. They can't do that because of all the Olympics secrecy. That's the bigger whoops. Like it or not, the city is symbiotically embroiled in the grand, global secrecy regime of the Olympics. Watch your wallets, folks.

Plumping

Ellen Woodsworth was elected in a very small part from plumping. [Plumping works](#). Some COPE supporters who were frustrated by the nature of the deal with Vision and Green--and others--voted for only COPE members and not for others on the slate from Vision. Ellen Woodsworth got elected to the last city council spot by 1023 votes over Kashmir Dhaliwal [the only Vision candidate for any council to not get elected] as of 10:24pm Saturday night. I doubt all those votes were from people voting for her and avoiding voting for Vision candidates to keep one or more of them from getting more votes than her. But with not too different arithmetic, the plumpers would have made the difference.

Privatized Police

Korina Houghton didn't get elected to city council for the NPA even though she had a full-page ad in 24hrs on Friday. Part of her plan was to "combat crime through continued support of the ambassador program" [meaning the Downtown Ambassadors](#), the partially city-funded, private pretend cops designed to criminalize the <irony>unsightly</irony> people from business areas. If 11,300 more voters actually wanted a private police force created by business owners and not transparently accountable to the public despite their public funding, she would have beaten Ellen Woodsworth for the 10th spot on council. Thankfully those 11,300 people don't exist. And while we're at it, let's de-fang the Ambassadors and get them back to helping tourists get from the art gallery back to the cruise ship terminal. And I'll leave out all that business about [Kanman Wong's campaign literature saying one thing in Chinese and another in English](#). [He's had his political career maimed enough already](#)...remember David Emerson?