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OLDER AND WISER: Seniors, get out and vote!

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Make sure to question your candidates when it comes to their platform concerning seniors' issues. photo supplied iStock

Recently, I saw an ad in the North Shore News where a young person, Andrew Warner, urges people to get out and vote in order to fight for the important things they believe in.

Andrew states: "I believe it's important to vote for candidates who take the actions you want them to."

Seniors are usually considered the largest voting bloc in an election and maybe they don't need to be encouraged to vote. But in this columnist's opinion, it never hurts to remind people to get out there and vote. It's a privilege and a necessity in a democratic country. As a friend told me recently: "Not voting is not an option. It's your civic obligation to vote."

Voting in the upcoming civic election is going to be very interesting as there will be a large turnover of municipal talent, with many incumbents retiring and new folks stepping in to take their places. It makes it hard to select people who have the experience and aptitude for the job. Perhaps to make it easier, select candidates who support the issues that you value. What I'd like the new candidates to consider, among the usual North Shore issues of affordable housing, traffic, transportation, congestion, rapid development, is community building and of course, as I'm a senior, the seniors' community.

Most of the "usual issues" will be raised at all-candidates meetings and most candidates will have formed some opinions about how to deal with these issues, but I'm not so sure they will have considered seniors.

So, if you are a senior ask your candidates questions about how they will support us.

Ask the candidates what they think about, and how they will support an age and dementia-friendly community. The three North Shore municipalities have endorsed Age and Dementia Friendly over the last few years. But will our new crop of elected officials continue to endorse this type of community in a meaningful way? I hope so.

The City of North Vancouver Seniors' Action Table has been working on age-friendly issues such as walkability in North Vancouver, bikes safety, more benches as one struggles up the steep hills in our neighbourhoods and so on, and we hope the folks at city hall will continue to hear our concerns.

The three municipalities have been working on dementia-friendly plan for the past year. "Dementia friendly communities are ones which exhibit a high level of public awareness and understanding so that people with dementia and their caregivers are encouraged to seek help and are supported by their community. They are also communities that adapt their facilities, infrastructure, programs and services to be accessible and inclusive to people with dementia," states the City of North Vancouver on its website's initiatives and policies page.

Will the candidates support this plan?

I would like the candidates to continue to support the overall community by supporting and maybe increasing community grants. These grants are a drop in the bucket of the entire budget of each municipality but the amazing work that's done with the use of municipal money is more than notable. The grants support seniors programming in recreation, maintaining social

connections, housing supports, food and nutrition security, co-ordination and education for seniors, and much more. The grants are a way to assist seniors in staying connected to the community, age in place and stay out of the expensive health-care systems. The grants support the non-profit sector in doing their important work for all the community.

In a report called "Raising the Profile of the Community-based Seniors' Services Sector in B.C.: A Review of the Literature," it states: "There is key evidence on the sectors role in promoting health, well-being and resilience for seniors. The research shows that a greater emphasis on health and prevention programs can result in significant improvement in seniors' health and reductions in the use of the health-care system."

I want to know if the candidates will support the new social plans being put together for the two North Vancouvers. These plans will guide the councils in relation to the community, especially its people. It is my opinion a civil society is not just about bricks and mortar, recycling and garbage collection (of course all important things for the community), it's about a healthy community which cares for its citizens.

As young Andrew Warner notes, "It's our governments' responsibility to take care of our community, so I hope you choose to go the polls and decide which people will take on that honourable role."

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