

Balance between environment and economy will be key election issue in Metro Vancouver: survey

VoteLocal poll finds majority of residents believe climate change is an emergency; federal taxes and an increased regulatory burden are the key concerns for businesses

September 16, 2019 (Vancouver) -- According to the latest [VoteLocal survey](#) of residents and businesses in Metro Vancouver, the environment is top of mind for voters in the upcoming federal election, with the dual crises of affordability and climate change – and how parties plan to strike a balance between the two issues – shaping up to be a key ballot box question.

When asked to list the top issues that will influence their vote, 49% of residents in the Mustel Group poll conducted in late August cited the environment. The economy and jobs (27%), affordability (21%) and various social issues (21%) followed behind. For businesses, the economy was the top issue (45%) with environment the second most cited concern (37%), ahead of taxes (28%) and affordability (21%).

“Federal parties vying for seats in this battleground region will be challenged to show voters that they have the right plan to protect the environment while at the same time protecting jobs and addressing the high cost of living,” said Anna Lilly, Senior Vice President and Partner with FleishmanHillard HighRoad, one of the organizations responsible for the VoteLocal survey, along with Mustel Group and the Greater Vancouver Board of Trade.

“Metro Vancouverites are clear in their desire to see governments at all levels do more to address housing affordability, but they are just as concerned that federal decision makers aren’t moving fast enough to address the growing threat of climate change,” said Evi Mustel, Principal of Mustel Group.

A majority of respondents to the public survey (58%) believe climate change is “an emergency” that requires immediate action, and almost half (49%) think the current federal government is on the wrong path in addressing the issue.

At the same time, both residents (53%) and businesses (69%) believe government should continue development of oil and gas resources while also investing in strategies to transition to alternative renewable energy sources. Among residents, 39% believe government should be more aggressive and focus on immediately transitioning away from oil and gas, while 23% of businesses say the same. When asked about the expansion of the Trans Mountain pipeline, 50% of residents and 76% of businesses support the project.

Almost half of residents surveyed (47%) believe people in this region have different priorities compared with residents of other cities, with many suggesting that people in Metro Vancouver are more concerned about environmental issues, and have been hit harder by escalating home prices.

On Canada’s economic picture, Metro Vancouver residents aren’t overly optimistic, with 28% believing the economy will decline over the next 5 years, and 31% believing it will stay the same. Business owners and managers are more pessimistic, with 43% saying the economy will decline.

“Business leaders in our region are clearly anxious about Canada’s economic competitiveness, resilience, and ability to weather the storm in the face of trade tensions and global economic uncertainty,” said David Crawford, Interim CEO of the Greater Vancouver Board of Trade. A total of 43% of business respondents believe the Canadian economy will decline in the next five years, while less than 1 in 5 believe it will improve.

VoteLocal’s [municipal election survey](#) in October 2018 found affordability was the defining issue at that time – so much so that 46% of residents said they had considered moving away from Metro Vancouver. While home prices and sales have cooled off over the past year, the latest VoteLocal survey found that has done little to allay affordability concerns – with 41% of residents now considering a move away from the region. Businesses are also concerned about affordability issues with 60% saying that their ability to attract and retain employees has been affected. Other aspects causing affordability concerns for residents include the cost of food/groceries, gas prices, transportation, taxes, healthcare, childcare and telecommunications services.

Federal taxes and an increased regulatory burden are the key concerns for businesses in this federal election. When asked to cite a practical action the next federal government should take to support the business community, 38% said “lower business taxes”, followed by reducing red tape and stabilizing foreign policy. Among those surveyed, 80% of business say they are somewhat or very concerned about negative impacts from foreign trade disputes.

In terms of information sources for voters, 78% of residents are concerned that ‘fake news’ or other non-factual information sources will affect this election. Most people will turn to journalism (online, TV, radio and print news) as their trusted source of information, with social media the least trusted source.

The VoteLocal federal election survey also includes findings on public and business community views on the opioid crisis, transit and transportation, ethics and accountability, immigration, crime and safety, and health care. The full report is available online at www.votelocalbc.ca.

VoteLocal

VoteLocal is a research initiative of Mustel Group, FleishmanHillard HighRoad and the Greater Vancouver Board of Trade, aimed at understanding how issues influence elections. VoteLocal seeks to raise awareness of issues in communities and to encourage voter participation in elections.

Survey Methodology

The VoteLocal survey included a random sample of Metro Vancouver adults, 18 years of age or over (n=600) and a survey of Greater Vancouver Board of Trade members (n=261). The survey was completed online from August 20th to September 3rd, 2019.

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