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## Nearly half of Metro Vancouver residents have considered relocating due to affordability: Survey

*VoteLocal survey shows civic leadership hopefuls face anxious voters, businesses in civic election*

**NEW WESTMINSTER, B.C., SEPT. 5, 2018** – With just six weeks to go until civic elections take place in communities across Metro Vancouver, almost half the region’s residents and over a third of its businesses say they have recently considered moving away from the region due to affordability concerns.

That is a key finding of the VoteLocal survey, a unique research project exploring the views of the public, businesses and politicians conducted by Mustel Group and FleishmanHillard HighRoad, in partnership with the Greater Vancouver Board of Trade. Findings of the survey were presented today at a briefing for current civic politicians and election candidates hosted by the Board of Trade and Chambers of Commerce from around the region.

The survey – conducted July 9-August 23 – shows that the October 20<sup>th</sup> elections will take place against a backdrop of significant concern and anxiety among voters, businesses and politicians in the region. A clear majority of residents (67%), businesses (75%), and political candidates (82%) believe quality of life and affordability in the region have declined in the last five years. The results are consistent in municipalities across the region. What’s more, residents and business owners expect things to get worse. Politicians are more optimistic than the general public, even though they do not feel municipal governments have much control over affordability.

With more than half of the region’s mayors retiring, this is shaping up to be the most interesting civic election in recent memory, with much at stake for the region.

“Metro Vancouver has long enjoyed a reputation for excellent quality of life, but residents and businesses seem to be falling out of love with the place we call home,” said Anna Lilly, Senior Vice President and Partner with FleishmanHillard HighRoad. “Our survey suggests that affordable housing, the pace of growth and development, and transportation are likely to dominate discussion in the lead up to October 20<sup>th</sup>, and while voters want action on housing, many are concerned about overdevelopment in their communities.”

Topping the list of key concerns among all three groups surveyed is the issue of housing affordability. Residents are reporting stronger support for action to dampen demand for housing, and less support for expediting permitting for new housing, compared to businesses and politicians. Candidates will need to

take a strategic approach to how they address housing policy solutions and development issues in the campaign.

There is also strong demand for action to improve transportation across the region, with residents, businesses and politicians all expressing strong support for improvements to the region's roads and public transit. Local road maintenance and traffic management tops the list of potential municipal government investments among all three respondent categories.

The three groups are split about other investment priorities. Residents want money spent on social housing and poverty reduction as well as city service improvements. Businesses would like to see a more regional approach to economic development and expedited permitting for new housing supply. For their part, politicians agree with residents on social housing and poverty reduction, and with businesses on permitting for development.

"Metro Vancouver residents are divided as to whether they think their municipality is on the right track or wrong track," said Evi Mustel, Principal of the Mustel Group. "Residents in the Northeast (Maple Ridge/Pitt Meadows), Southeast (Surrey/Langley) and City of Vancouver are most likely to say their city council is on the wrong track, which suggests these will be the communities to watch for significant changes in the make-up of city councils on election day."

"These survey results confirm what our Members and local business leaders have been telling us for a long time — that concern and frustration is growing across our region over affordability, traffic congestion, planning and permitting delays, and the lack of a cohesive region-wide strategy for economic development," said Hon. Iain Black, President and CEO of the Greater Vancouver Board of Trade. "It has never been more crucial for our region to work collaboratively, given that the challenges facing our region cut across municipal boundaries. We hope that the 2018 Local Elections will be a turning point for Greater Vancouver, and that the VoteLocal survey results will help candidates make informed public policy commitments throughout the election campaign — and beyond."

## **About VoteLocal**

The VoteLocal survey, completed online from July 9-August 23, included three different groups:

- A random sample of Metro Vancouver adults, 18 years of age or over (n=533)
- Greater Vancouver Board of Trade members (n=184)
- Current mayors and councillors, and candidates in the up-coming election (n=93)

VoteLocal is a research and education initiative of [FleishmanHillard HighRoad](#), [Mustel Group](#) and the [Greater Vancouver Board of Trade](#), with the goal of encouraging awareness and participation in the 2018 municipal election in Metro Vancouver and across British Columbia. The complete report is available at <http://votelocalbc.ca>.

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