



The District of North Vancouver REGULAR MEETING REPORT TO COUNCIL

June 25, 2018

File:

AUTHOR: Mairi Welman, Manager, Strategic Communications & Community Relations

SUBJECT: Results of Reunification Public Engagement

RECOMMENDATION:

That Council receive for information the report from the Manager, Strategic Communications, "*Results of Reunification Public Engagement*," including the attached "*North Vancouver survey on Identity, Joint delivery of Services, and Reunification*", by eNRG Research Group.

REASON FOR REPORT:

At its regular meeting on April 16, 2018, Council directed staff to proceed with:

- Placing advertising in the North Shore News containing an open letter to the public from Mayor and Council regarding reunification of the District and the City of North Vancouver
- Conducting a random-sample, demographically and statistically representative public opinion survey of District and City of North Vancouver residents regarding attitudes about identity, joint service delivery, and reunification

This work has now been completed and staff are providing the results to Council.

SUMMARY:

This report summarizes the results of the random-sample statistically representative public opinion survey conducted by a professional polling firm between April 23 and May 1, 2018.

This survey asked a total of 615 residents living in both the City and District of North Vancouver questions relating to identity, important community issues, and awareness of reunification/amalgamation discussions. Its main purpose was to ascertain whether citizens felt the question of amalgamation warranted further independent study.

Due to a high level of public interest, it was decided to also offer the option to residents to complete the same suite of questions in an on-line, self-selecting survey. Advertising raised awareness of this option. The results of the on-line survey are provided separately in this report.

It is of utmost importance that the results from the two surveys not be compared or conflated. The online survey is neither statistically-relevant nor demographically-representative. It is self-selected and therefore must be considered separately.

Appendix A provides the results of the professional survey.

BACKGROUND:

District Council has clearly indicated it is in favour of exploring the costs and benefits associated with the reunification of the District and the City of North Vancouver.

The District enabled resident discussion of reunification by establishing and supporting a *Blue Ribbon Committee* of District and City residents, which produced a report in late 2014 that identified the scope of issues associated with amalgamation.

This was followed by various additional background research reports completed by District staff. Included in this research are case study summaries of relevant amalgamation process experiences in BC; namely the Abbotsford-Matsqui merger achieved in 1995, and the Duncan-North Cowichan amalgamation study process, which is still underway.

In April 2018 Council directed staff to engage the public directly on the question of reunification by placing advertising containing an open letter from Council to the public in the local newspaper, and conducting a statistically-relevant, demographically-representative survey of residents in both the City and the District to gauge support for investigating the costs and benefits of amalgamation, discovering top issues of concern, levels of awareness of shared services, and sense of identity.

As per Council's direction, the public engagement on reunification took the form of:

- Public release of all previous staff research materials and the report from the District's *Blue Ribbon Committee* on reunification
- Full page newspaper ads in the North Shore News
- Media relations
- A professionally conducted statistically-relevant and demographically-representative public opinion survey
- Web content
- Social media content

Council invited the City of North Vancouver to partner in the engagement exercise. The invitation was declined.

ANALYSIS:

Professional Survey:

The professional survey met all best practise standards for methodology in public opinion polling and was statistically-relevant and demographically-representative, with the sample chosen to reflect the age and gender mix of the 2016 census data on population. This survey engaged 615 residents in total, and asked them a suite of questions relating to identity, general issues, and interest in reunification.

- The total sample size of 615 people provides for a sampling error of +/- 3.9 percentage points at the 95% level of confidence.
- Samples were 304 respondents from the District of North Vancouver and 310 from the City of North Vancouver. One resident did not know which municipality they lived in.
- The margin of error for each area is +/- 5.6%, again at the 95% level of confidence.

Key questions and responses are highlighted below, and the full report is attached as Appendix A.

Where residents say they live:

- Most residents say North Vancouver when asked where they live (86%)
 - This proportion is identical for DNV and CNV

What are the top issues facing your community?

- Traffic/transportation concerns (63% total, 65% District, 59% City)
- Affordable housing (32% total, 30% District, 35% City)
- Public Transit (25% total, 26% District, 24% City)
- Infrastructure planning (25% total, 25% District, 25% City)

Awareness of shared services:

- 55% of North Vancouver residents are not aware of any services that the City and District of North Vancouver deliver jointly.
 - Of those residents who are aware of services delivered jointly, 48% cite recreational and cultural facilities, followed closely by police services at 47%

Do you think the District and the City should jointly investigate the true costs and benefits of amalgamation?

- Yes 87% total
 - 91% DNV
 - 82% CNV
- No 9% total
 - 8% DNV
 - 11% CNV

Online Survey:

An online survey was available to residents in both municipalities after the formal phone survey closed and was open until May 11. It was comprised of the very same questions included in the professional survey. Its purpose was to provide an input channel for those residents who:

- did not get a call from the survey firm,
- did not have time to take the survey when called, or
- whose demographic quotient had already been reached when they were screened by the survey firm.

Online survey respondents were self-selected and were not asked for demographic information, however they were asked to provide their postal code.

A total of 783 responses to the online survey were received:

- 562 from the District
- 219 from the City

Quite apart from the responses to the survey questions themselves, which generally mirror those received in the professional survey, it is notable that 783 North Vancouver residents felt compelled to take the time to go online, find the survey, and provide their opinion on the matter of reunification.

Financial Impacts:

The final cost to implement the engagement tactics was \$24,800, an increase over the original estimate of \$22,750 due to the addition of the online survey option and the supporting newspaper ads.

Liability/Risk:

There was no liability associated with this project other than a potential perceived risk relating to the unpredictability of the outcome of the survey.

Public Input:

This project provided citizens in the District and the City an opportunity to provide input on the topic of reunification.

Conclusion:

This report provides the results of engaging residents in the City and the District to gauge support for investigating the costs and benefits of amalgamation, discovering top issues of concern, levels of awareness of shared services, and sense of identity.

Respectfully submitted,



Mairi Welman
Manager, Strategic Communications & Community Relations

Appendices:

A: Report from eNRG Research Group

			REVIEWED WITH:					
<input type="checkbox"/> Sustainable Community Dev.	_____		<input type="checkbox"/> Clerk's Office	_____		External Agencies:		
<input type="checkbox"/> Development Services	_____		<input type="checkbox"/> Communications	_____		<input type="checkbox"/> Library Board	_____	
<input type="checkbox"/> Utilities	_____		<input type="checkbox"/> Finance	_____		<input type="checkbox"/> NS Health	_____	
<input type="checkbox"/> Engineering Operations	_____		<input type="checkbox"/> Fire Services	_____		<input type="checkbox"/> RCMP	_____	
<input type="checkbox"/> Parks	_____		<input type="checkbox"/> ITS	_____		<input type="checkbox"/> NVRC	_____	
<input type="checkbox"/> Environment	_____		<input type="checkbox"/> Solicitor	_____		<input type="checkbox"/> Museum & Arch.	_____	
<input type="checkbox"/> Facilities	_____		<input type="checkbox"/> GIS	_____		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other:	_____	
<input type="checkbox"/> Human Resources	_____		<input type="checkbox"/> Real Estate	_____				

