



TC ARTS/ENT.: A12

Wearable Arts winners are...?

MOSSOM
CREEK
HATCHERY
PROJECT

15 months after the fire that burned to the ground Port Moody's Mossom Creek Hatchery, the rebuilding project — involving thousands of volunteer hours and more than a million dollars in grants and donations — is nearing completion. **See page A3**



DIANE STRANDBERG/THE TRI-CITY NEWS

Tanya Xenis of Green Elevations works on a green roof created by Ron Schwenger and Architek Engineered Solutions for Living Buildings for the Mossom Creek Hatchery.

FIRE

Three homes damaged in latest Coq. fire

SARAH PAYNE
THE TRI-CITY NEWS

A fire in Coquitlam Monday evening damaged at least three homes and left two people injured.

Coquitlam Fire/Rescue was called out at about 6:20 p.m. to the homes in the 3000-block of Riverbend Drive, near Westwood Street. It appears the fire started in one house and then spread to two neighbouring homes; other houses nearby may have also sustained damage.

About two dozen fire-fighters battled the two-alarm blaze. Two people were taken to hospital with minor burns.

There is no information yet as to the cause of the fire.

It's the third major fire this year in Coquitlam. In mid-February, more than a hundred people were left homeless after a fire ripped through an apartment building on Glen Drive. It is believed the fire started near a barbecue on the balcony of a second-floor unit. The 1980s-era building did not have a sprinkler system.

SEE SEARCHERS, PAGE A4

CIVIC ELECTION SPENDING

Developers dug deep for city elections

Unions not as big spenders for civic politicians

GARY MCKENNA
THE TRI-CITY NEWS

Financial disclosure forms from the 2014 civic elections were made public

last month, outlining exactly how much each of the candidates raised and spent during the fall campaign. But a closer look at the documents reveals just how concentrated the funding sources are in municipal politics, with the bulk of the contributions coming from two groups: real estate developers and unions.

For example, of the more than \$312,000 raised by the nine candidates elected to Coquitlam city council in November, close to \$169,000 (54%) came from the development industry.

In Port Moody, unions made up the largest piece of the political contributions pie, contributing 33.2% of the total \$125,000

the seven winners raised in their election effort, a percentage that increases to 41.5% when Mayor Mike Clay's totals are removed from the equation (generally, mayoral candidates must spend more than councillors when running for election, which can skew the overall results). Widespread develop-

ment has taken place in the Tri-Cities, and developers such as Wesbild and Onni Group's parent company, RPMG Holdings, made significant political contributions to candidates.

But Coquitlam Coun. Craig Hodge said he does not believe council votes are influenced by campaign contributors — although

he acknowledges that view is not always shared by residents.

"Never in my four years did I feel that a vote was compromised," he told *The Tri-City News*. "I really don't think that stuff happens. But there is that public perception."

SEE SOME, PAGE A6

INSIDE

Limit spending on civic elections, says SFU prof
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Some politicians want spending limits

CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

Hodge raised \$40,172 for his successful re-election effort: 58.1% from developers, 22.7% from other businesses, 10.8% from individuals and 5.6% from unions.

In preparation for the 2014 race, Hodge said he tried to find balance between his contributors and avoided taking too much from one single person or entity.

On the other side of the equation, donors contacted by *The Tri-City News* insist they are not trying to buy influence with their campaign contributions.

Jennifer Derbyshire, the director of marketing with Wesbild, said her company donates money to a variety of charities and community groups, and election campaign contributions are another way of supporting the municipality and the political process.

"It does take quite a bit of money [to run]," Derbyshire said. "We want to support the process and get good people on council. If we are not willing to support the process, nobody is going to be able to run."

Candidates usually solicit the company for donations, she said, and each request is assessed on a case-by-case basis.

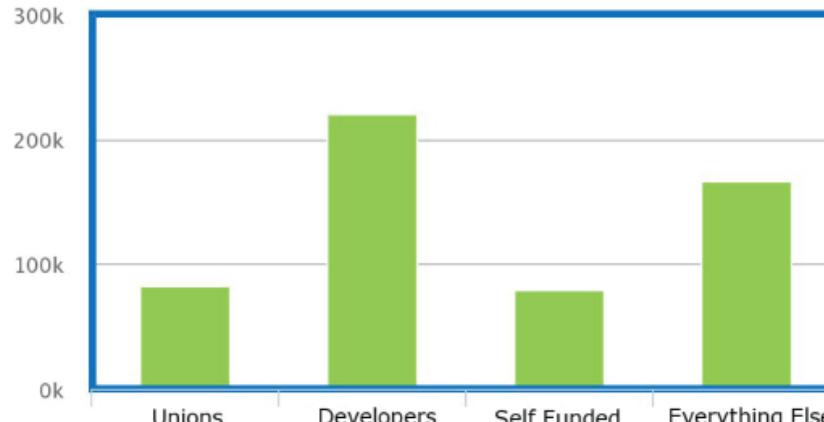
Carolyn Rice, the secretary-treasurer of the New Westminster District Labour Council, which also endorses candidates and contributes to their campaigns, said her organization tries to highlight issues they believe are ignored by other candidates.

She does not believe that the donations have sway over officials' decisions on collective bargaining agreements and said the labour council looks for candidates who represent the broad interests of the community.

"People we have supported in the past have championed some pretty important causes," she said. "They go to issues like cosmetic pesticides, protecting our trees and air quality."

And she asked, "What organization would raise these

TRI-CITY 2014 MUNICIPAL ELECTION SPENDING



TC'S BIG SPENDERS

COQUITLAM

- Wesbild: \$11,000 + \$3,000 from subsidiary Pageant Holdings + \$16,000 from subsidiary Burke Mountain Ltd. — TOTAL: \$30,000
- RPMG Holdings: \$15,000 + \$500 from subsidiary Anthem Properties and \$150 from subsidiary Onni — TOTAL: \$15,650
- Infinity Properties: \$14,000

PORT COQUITLAM

- RPMG Holdings: \$9,000 + \$5,000 from subsidiary Onni — TOTAL: \$14,000
- Mosaic Homes: \$5,500
- River's Edge Business Park Partnership (ConWest): \$3,000

PORT MOODY

- RPMG Holdings: \$11,500 + \$1,000 from subsidiary Anthem Properties — TOTAL: \$12,500
- Wesgroup Properties: \$3,000
- TL Housing Solutions: \$1,500

kinds of issues if it was not for the collective effort of an organization like ours?"

CONFFLICT?

Still, some candidates would rather avoid even a whiff of conflict of interest.

Disclosure forms show that Port Coquitlam Coun. Mike Forrest paid the entire \$7,011 tab for his campaign expenses and he said he only accepts contributions in rare instances, such as a friend wanting to support him with an individual donation.

"I don't want to be seen as compromised," he said, noting he finds contributions from unions repre-

senting city workers particularly problematic.

"I have considerable difficulty with the idea that we are supported by various people and then we get to vote on their contracts," he said.

In PoCo, union contributions make up 15.9% of the \$115,458 raised by the seven council winners, a percentage that rises to 25.8% when Mayor Greg Moore's \$49,867 in donations is removed from the total. Meanwhile, developers contributed 27.8% while 9.9% of the funds came from the candidates themselves.

Forrest acknowledges that in larger municipali-

ties, self-funded campaigns may not always be a viable option.

For example, last fall in Coquitlam, the winning candidate who raised the least amount of money was Coun. Teri Towner, who spent \$19,582 (61.3% from developers, 31.1% from individuals, 4.2% from other businesses and nothing from unions).

Self funding \$20,000 to launch a credible campaign can be difficult for the average resident, and finding balance between contributors is not always possible.

Port Moody Coun. Barbara Junker for example, raised \$20,969, 87.5% of which came from unions (another 4.8% came from developers and 7.7% came from individual contributors). Junker was contacted by *The Tri-City News* for comment but did not return calls by deadline.

SPENDING CAP

On the flip side, longtime Coquitlam Coun. Mae Reid raised \$30,000 for her re-election campaign, of which 80% came from the development industry (the other 20% came from businesses not associated with development). And she acknowledged that the amount of money being thrown around at election time is concerning.

"I think there should be a cap on what you can spend. I really believe that," she said. "It is getting to the point where it is ridiculous."

She notes that the cost

Caps on spending and contributions: Smith

GARY MCKENNA

THE TRI-CITY NEWS

COQUITLAM COUNCIL

TOTAL UNION:	\$22,368 (7.3%)
TOTAL DEVELOPMENT:	\$168,750 (54.8%)
SELF-FUNDED:	\$53,623 (17.4%)
THE REST:	\$63,207 (20.5%)

PORT COQUITLAM COUNCIL

TOTAL UNION:	\$18,400 (15.9%)
TOTAL DEVELOPMENT:	\$32,050 (27.8%)
SELF-FUNDED:	\$11,406 (9.9%)
THE REST:	\$53,602 (46.4%)

PORT MOODY COUNCIL

TOTAL UNION:	\$41,592 (33.2%)
TOTAL DEVELOPMENT:	\$19,250 (15.4%)
SELF-FUNDED:	\$14,580 (11.6%)
THE REST:	\$49,980 (39.9%)

ceived \$1,500 from RPMG Holdings and \$1,000 from Infinity Properties Nov. 24.

Unions also contributed to candidates after the Nov. 15 election.

Port Moody Coun. Barbara Junker was given \$3,350 by the New Westminster District Labour Council on January 26, 2015 while the Hospital Employees Union gave councillors Zoe Royer and Rick Glumac \$400 each in 2015.

Having money change hands after an election is concerning, Smith said, because it assures the donors that "we are in power and you are talking to the right people."

But Smith believes that change is starting to come to how the province regulates municipal election finance. He notes city clerks are no longer responsible for the oversight of financial disclosure, after the process was taken over by Elections BC ahead of the 2014 vote, and that has created greater consistency in the application of the rules.

"They have to get at this and it looks like they are," he said. "I am hopeful that 2014 will be the last municipal election where we are awash in money."

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of running a campaign is constantly rising. These days, newspaper ads are still her biggest expense but new costs related to website advertising and social media have made the process more expensive. If each candidate had a cap, they could decide how best to allocate their funds, she said.

Reid also believes there should be a limit on when candidates can raise funds while Coun. Hodge said giving tax receipts for con-

tributions, as is done at the provincial and federal levels, might encourage more individuals to donate (see sidebar).

Coquitlam Mayor Richard Stewart summed up one of his suggestions for improving civic election regulations in one word: clarity.

Several times, his campaign had to deal with conflicting interpretations of finance rules, making it difficult for even a seasoned campaigner like himself to

understand what was and wasn't allowed.

But, on the whole, Stewart said he believes the rules around civic election contributions only need minor tweaks.

"I think the regulations are a step in the right direction," he said. "Now, we need to spend the next couple of years refining them so they work better and they are seen to work better."

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