



Saanich MATTERS

Saanich Civic League E-Bulletin



October 22, 2008

UVic Students Could Rock Saanich Vote

An estimated **7,000 UVic students live in Saanich**

A mobilized UVic student community could increase voter turnout by as much as 50% over the last municipal election and be the single largest demographic group to decide who is elected to Saanich Council on November 15. There are an estimated 7,000 UVic students residing in Saanich, and the majority may be eligible to vote in the Saanich municipal election.

15,704 Saanich voters voted in last municipal election

Only 19% of Saanich residents voted in the 2005 municipal election - only 15,704 out of 82,424 eligible voters. From Union of B.C. Municipalities data, it appears Saanich scored the fifth lowest voter turnout of 185 municipalities in BC the last time around.

Who knew? The University of Victoria is in Victoria, right? Wrong. The UVic campus spans two municipalities – Oak Bay and Saanich. Although UVic students reside wherever they can find housing in Greater Victoria, about 2,000 students live on campus in residences located on the Saanich side of the boundary. And, of UVic’s estimated 14,000 students living on and off campus, approximately 7,000 are thought to be Saanich residents.

Why vote local?

Local jobs
Affordable housing
Bus and rapid transit
Sewage and environment
Climate change
Saanich’s future

Why vote municipally this November? Local (municipal) is the level of government that most directly affects our daily lives. Think about it.

- Where does the water come from for your morning shower?
- Who plans the roads/bike paths/sidewalks/bus system we travel on each day?
- What level of government guides local land-use decisions including whether construction on campus is built ‘up’ or sprawls ‘out’ across UVic green space?
- Who plans emergency response, fire and police protection?
- Who is, or could be, negotiating for more affordable housing and legalized secondary suites?
- What level of government needs to lead implementation of rapid transit --- crucial to meet our now legal obligation to reduce carbon emissions locally, by one-third?
- Who supports or denies applications to subdivide arable land needed for local food supply.
- What level of government has the greatest impact on how citizens react and adapt to climate change?

The answer to all the above is—**municipal government!**

Local vote carries more weight than in provincial or federal election.

Flex your muscle municipally. Municipal is also the level of government where each individual's vote has the most impact. Proportionally, your vote carries more weight in a local election than in a federal or provincial one. Furthermore, as senior governments download governance responsibilities to the local level (think housing and city infrastructure), your local vote affects not only your own quality of life but also other people's—regionally, and globally. The people we elect to our municipal councils this November will have the power to make good or bad decisions on all these issues at the Council table and as our representatives to the Capital Regional District (CRD) board. In many ways, our current quality of life—the good, the bad, and the tawdry—is the result of decades of decisions by past mayors and councils.

Check just one name and **your ballot counts**

The Ballot. When you vote on Saturday November 15 (or at the advance polls November 5 and November 10), Saanich residents can vote for a mayor, up to eight councillors, four councillors to represent Saanich on the CRD, and nine school trustees. You do not have to vote for every position. Even if you check one name on the ballot, your vote counts.

What's CRD? Capital Regional District is where local municipalities come together to plan and make decisions for the collective good (we hope!) of Greater Victoria's 13 municipalities and 3 electoral areas. Think – the Bear Mountain development, sewage treatment, regional transportation and planning. Saanich holds five of the 23 seats on the CRD, more than any other municipality, giving Saanich voters tremendous potential influence on future quality of life throughout the region. For details see [SaanichMatters E-Bulletin What Does CRD Do?](#)

Why vote? If you care about community, affordable housing, rapid transit/transportation planning, preservation of green space, water quality and the environment, sewage treatment, local food security, local jobs, local taxes, or climate change – or if you don't -- this November is your one opportunity in the next three years to vote for candidates who share your values.

How hard can voting be? Millions do it.

Does it have to be easy for students to vote? In recent years Elections BC and Elections Canada had a mandate to increase the participation of 'youth' and 'new' voters in provincial and federal elections. Both offices were given big budgets to finance funky Get The Vote Out/Shake Your Head campaigns. Not so at the municipal level. Local electoral officers, who are usually municipal staff, have neither the money, the machinery, nor the mandate to educate and engage that so-called 'next generation of voters'.

Will a lack of local imperative stop student from voting? What are the obstacles from a student perspective? That E-Day falls on a Saturday at the end of Reading Break when few students are on-campus to mobilize is one complicating factor. That the alternate date advance polls (Wednesday November 5 and Monday November 10) are solely at municipal hall some distance from campus by bus may be another. However, obstacles can lead to solutions.

Take the polls to the people.
21st century solutions

What if city hall took the polling stations to the people? With a potential 7,000 Saanich-resident student voters at UVic, would it make sense to put a mobile polling station on campus for the advanced vote? Alternatively, in time for the next municipal election, should students and the hard-to-reach voter be able to vote electronically as is the case this year in Berwick, Windsor, and Stewiacke Nova Scotia?

Do those who vote control your future?

Who will choose? Of the just 19% of Saanich citizens who turned out to vote for Saanich Council in our last municipal election, it is fairly safe to assume that most were in the middle-age-to-elderly demographic. These are the people who say, *“I vote because I have always voted. It is my civic responsibility. I organize my day to make sure I get out and vote.”*

As the November 15 municipal election approaches, consider these questions —

Who voted and who did not vote last time ‘round?

Whose voice is not being heard?

Whose values are not being counted?

How do I decide who to vote for?

When the people who make decisions about Saanich and Greater Victoria’s future are voted into office November 15, make sure your voice, your values, and your vote matter. Become informed. You can read about the candidates on this website, email candidates the questions that matter to you, attend an All-Candidate Meeting in your neighbourhood (dates/venues listed at HOTNews&Events on this site), talk to your friends and neighbours. If you have a student living in your basement, forward this E-bulletin to them. Count yourself in...as if your future, and our collective future, depended on it.

Meet the Candidates on-line
Email a question

Check us out!
Voter info on campus
Nov 4 and 5

Saanich Civic League and its UVic student partner groups host a Voter Information Action Centre noontime Tuesday November 4 and Wednesday November 5.

Check us out. Get involved! info@saanichcivicleague.ca

Vote Early
Nov 5 or Nov 10

Advanced Poll –
Wednesday November 5
Monday November 10
8 am to 8 pm
Saanich Municipal Hall. 770 Vernon Avenue

Celebration E-Day Party
Vote on E-Day Nov 15

Vote on E-Day –
Saturday November 15
8 am to 8 pm at any of the 16 Saanich voting stations

Can I Vote?
Where Do I Vote ?

Who Can Vote? How to Vote? Where to Vote in Saanich.
<http://www.gov.saanich.bc.ca> Municipal election information