

## Gregor Robertson re-elected mayor of Vancouver



Mayor re-elect Gregor Robertson and his wife Amy celebrate his victory at the Sheraton Wall Centre in Vancouver, Nov. 19, 2011.

Tristin Hopper Nov 20, 2011

Despite pollster's expectations that he would face a close race, Gregor Robertson clinched an easy second term as mayor of Vancouver on Saturday night, besting his closest opponent Suzanne Anton by nearly 20,000 votes.

In addition, all seven candidates in Mr. Robertson's Vision Vancouver party were elected to city council. "This is a great night for everyone who believes in a bright future for our city," said Mr. Robertson in his victory speech Saturday night.

As promised, the 46-year-old mayor is expected to continue with his pledge to eradicate homelessness by 2015 and establish a sweeping set of environmental reforms that will make Vancouver the world's "greenest city" by 2020.

“You have sent a very clear message in Vancouver that goes well beyond our borders ... we have shown that we can manage budgets through a recession and still be environmental leaders,” Mr. Robertson told supporters on Saturday.

For the last three years, the handsome former NDP MLA and juice entrepreneur has enjoyed sweeping support. Nevertheless, in recent days it seemed Ms. Anton had been able to close the gap.

In a Forum Research poll taken on Thursday the Vancouver mayoral race was found to be a “statistical tie.” Mr. Robertson held a four percentage point lead over Anton, which was considered within the poll’s 3.5% margin of error.

Since May, Ms. Anton, the candidate for Vancouver’s Non-Partisan Association, had been pushing a “taxpayers first” agenda and mounting a heavily-negative campaign against Mr. Robertson. However, it was only in the last couple of weeks that Ms. Anton was really able to gain traction with voters by criticizing Mr. Robertson’s handling of the Occupy Vancouver encampment.

As the site increasingly descended into lawlessness – and tragedy, following the overdose death of a 23-year-old woman – Ms. Anton called the city’s failure to close the camp as evidence of Mr. Robertson’s “lack of leadership.”

To close off their campaign on Friday, the NPA mounted a mock tent city on the lawns of Vancouver city hall. “The 99% want their city back,” read one sign.

On Saturday before casting his ballot, Mr. Robertson told reporters that he doubted Occupy Vancouver would be his downfall. “I don’t think it has affected us,” he said.

Ms. Anton has one consolation prize: Her NPA party will hold two seats on Vancouver City Council, rather than just one. “Not having people to second your motions has been hard,” said Ms. Anton in her Saturday night concession speech. “There will be debate at city hall. That is much better for the democratic process.”

Adriane Carr, former leader of the B.C. Green Party, was narrowly swept into Vancouver City Council by less than 100 votes. After more than 25 years of running as a Green Party candidate for municipal, provincial and federal office, it is Ms. Carr’s first electoral win.

Province-wide, Mr. Robertson was only one of dozens of B.C. mayors elected or re-elected on Saturday. In more than 200 separate elections, voters from Victoria to Prince George picked more than 1,600 mayors, city councilors and school board trustees.

Mr. Robertson’s victory follows three decades of precedent; no incumbent Vancouver mayor has been defeated since the 1980s. Similarly, most other major B.C. cities favoured the incumbent. In Victoria, Mayor Dean Fortin easily took another term, as did many of his counterparts in the 12 other municipalities that surround the Vancouver Island city. Surrounding Vancouver, mayors in Richmond, Surrey, New Westminster, North Vancouver, West Vancouver and Burnaby all kept their seats.

However, in Prince George Mayor Dan Rogers suffered an upset to city councilor Shari Green. In Whistler, the city's Olympics-era mayor Ken Melamed was also voted out.

Historically, British Columbians are not good at showing up to municipal elections. In 2008, a mere 32% of eligible voters in BC bothered showing up to the polls – the lowest in Canada.

On Saturday morning, signs with biting slogans such as “Mommy still vote for you?” and “Vote. Or shut the f-k up” lined the streets of Vancouver in the hours before polls opened as part of an unorthodox “get out the vote” campaign by a group of local business owners.

Nevertheless, only 36% of BC voters are estimated to have made it out this year, with voter turnout in some municipalities dropping below 20%.