



**MARK MARISSSEN SPEECH  
OCTOBER 28, 2021  
FRASERVIEW HALL**

**- CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY -**

Thank you Jason.

And thank you, Debra Sparrow.

We acknowledge that we live and work on the Unceded Territories of the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Nations.

And thank you, Meena.

And thank you — everyone — for being here.

I've known many of you from so many campaigns.

I've been in your homes, we've knocked on doors together, and we've made real change, together.

You're the people who make our city great.

I know **YOU'RE HERE** because **YOU** care about this place, and you want to see our city thrive.

And **WE'RE HERE** because **WE** know that solutions can only be found when citizens choose to band together and decide to **MAKE** change happen.

To **CHOOSE PROGRESS.**

Progress on the urgent issues that affect us. Issues like:

- Housing,

- homelessness,
- mental health,
- small business,
- transit,

Choosing progress on these issues is becoming more challenging every day.

And we've got a City Hall that has proven itself utterly unequal to this task.

As you know, Vancouver has had some great city councils.

- **George Puil** working with **Harry Rankin**.
- **Phillip Owen** with **Libby Davies**.

Their disagreements were the stuff of legend, but they got things done.

The Four Pillars strategy was one that came to mind.

They found ways to put the city's interests ahead of their own political interests and ahead of their egos.

They kept their minds open to compromise and ideas, because, for the most part, they felt it was more important to make this city better than it was to score political points.

Keeping an open mind, being willing to listen to those with whom you disagree, to be willing to compromise for a larger goal – **THAT** takes courage.

It's been the **courage** of many incredible councillors from across the political spectrum that have helped to make this city one of the best in the world.

The kind of **courage** that's so hard to find today.

## **HOUSING**

One of our biggest challenges, that requires **courage**, is housing.

With our protracted housing shortage, Vancouver is well on its way to becoming a city for the very rich and the very poor.

The rich live in multi-million dollar penthouse suites downtown (and in houses only they can afford), while many of our poor live on the streets, in their cars, or in decaying SRO's.

And our dwindling middle class? Our kids?

They can't afford to live here.

Neither can our kids teachers. Or our nurses, our tradespeople, our fire fighters.

Most younger families can only hope to own a home in Vancouver if they inherit it.

And, when looking for a place to rent, they've got very few options that provide them with any kind of long-term security.

So where do they go?

Surrey welcomes them. Burnaby welcomes them. Langley welcomes them.

And people who used to live here in Vancouver are also joining them, reluctantly cashing out when they can.

They're now driving in from the suburbs,

- stuck in their cars,
- polluting everyone's air,
- building longer and longer highways that all of us have to pay for,
- and challenging everyone's quality of life.

It doesn't have to be this way.

Before we talk about solutions, it's important for all of us to acknowledge one thing: **HOUSES** in the city of Vancouver — **SINGLE FAMILY HOUSES** — will most likely never be affordable for the average middle class family again.

So, if we want to be a city for middle class families, we need to be building **HOMES**.

Homes that may not have a yard as big as one in Langley or Abbotsford, but homes that are closer to school and to work, and homes for seniors that can be found in the same neighbourhoods where they grew up.

**We need these homes, near schools and transit, and we need them now.**

We also need more co-ops, more non-profit housing. Our housing shortage is affecting everyone in this city.

This is because, on most of the residential land in Vancouver, it's illegal to build much more than a duplex or a laneway home.

And in the few spots where it's allowed, you have to spend years going through all the hoops, eventually going to city council, wasting everyone's precious time, and their money.

Today, Sam Sullivan tells me that half of this city's residential land has fewer people living on it than there were 40 years ago.

Over the last generation, instead of replacing family bungalows with affordable homes that could accommodate more people, they've been replaced with larger houses, holding fewer people.

This housing shortage is due, in part, to our City Hall's slowness — or unwillingness — to act.

But change is in the air.

Just this past month, New Zealand banned single-family exclusionary zoning in five of the country's biggest cities, and California also announced something similar, state-wide.

And there's some movement here in BC.

Our BC government has just announced legislation to speed up the municipal permitting process, but these measures won't apply to Vancouver, given that we operate under our own charter.

Vancouver's efforts on permitting to date have been led by some of our city councillors, who are here tonight.

They haven't been led by the Mayor.

As Mayor, I will lead the fight to step up efforts to **reform our outdated land use policies** and **clean up our permitting processes** so that we can build the homes we need.

As Mayor, I won't tinker around the edges.

**We need LEADERSHIP, for a change.**

Housing is the priority and, more than anything else right now, that's the job of the Mayor.

At the present rate, because of our City Hall, Surrey will surpass Vancouver's population in less than 10 years.

Think about that: at this rate, they'll change the region's name to Metro Surrey!

Surrey leads, while we slide backwards.

(And I should mention that Surrey just announced this week that it will now guarantee its timelines for issuing building permits.)

Here in Vancouver, it's well past the time to act.

It's time for change.

## **THE "PERMIT RAJ"**

Many of you are quite familiar with red tape.

For example, there was this problem in India - the **PERMIT RAJ**. (Or the license raj, as it has been called)

The **PERMIT RAJ** was the system of licences, regulations, and red tape, that — for 40 years — strangled businesses from operating at their full potential in India.

Before anyone want to introduce a new product or service, up to 80 government agencies had to be satisfied. And, if they were, government officials would then micromanage and regulate everything.

The result was that only the largest businesses were able to navigate the permitting process, and wealth became concentrated among just a few families.

About 30 years ago, Prime Minister Rao tasked his finance minister, Manmohan Singh, to lead the charge - to dismantle this permit raj.

As you know, he did such a good job, Singh later became India's first Sikh Prime Minister, in 2004.

Red tape still persists, but these radical reforms helped to unleash the entrepreneurial spirit of India, to kick-start its economy and to lift millions from poverty.

Now we must do the same for Vancouver.

We need to clean up the **KENNEDY STEWART PERMIT RAJ!**

There are as many as 100 projects mired in this permit raj.

The average wait time for business permits and licensing in Vancouver is over 8 months. Some take years.

The average economic loss per business permit or license estimated to be over \$700,000 or about \$30,000 per week.

And, when you have so many byzantine rules, regulations and processes, only the big developers know how to handle it all.

Big business can figure it out – and, with **Kennedy Stewart's permit raj, the rest of us get left behind!**

### **SMALL BUSINESS**

And, of course, this isn't just a problem for people looking for a place to live, it's a problem for small businesses too!

We are watching, especially after the stress of Covid, many of our long time local businesses wither and die, only to be boarded up or replaced by huge corporate chains.

That change is gutting our neighbourhoods.

That's why we have to help small businesses in Vancouver as they wrestle with a tangle of taxes, fees, permitting and regulations.

We need to review all of them — fix many of them — and make Vancouver a place where entrepreneurs can thrive, create jobs and give life to our communities.

### **MENTAL HEALTH**

Our next major issue is our mental health.

The last 18 months, since the pandemic began, have challenged everyone's mental health.

Understandably, governments around the world have made tackling COVID-19 an urgent priority.

But the public health emergency around opioid deaths in BC was declared much earlier, in 2016.

Since then, the overdose death rate has almost doubled.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, more people have died from the opioid crisis — this drug poisoning crisis — than from COVID-19.

Every one of them is someone's son, daughter, mother, father, auntie, uncle, or friend.

This crisis requires a COVID-like response.

The opioid crisis needs its own Bonnie Henry to be 100% engaged on this, working closely with experts, conducting daily press conferences until this issue has been solved.

Because, as we learned with the pandemic, when there's a will, there's a way.

We have more than hope to guide us here.

We have enormous talent who have dedicated their lives to helping people struggling with trauma.

We need to listen to the experts, marshal our resources, and ground our solutions in love and compassion.

## **HOMELESSNESS**

And this brings us to the issue of homelessness.

Secure shelter is something that all of us need to conduct a productive, healthy life.

And homelessness is a mental health issue as much as it is a housing issue.

Building homes for those who don't have a home today must be part of a comprehensive strategy that includes addressing mental health, addictions and chronic poverty.

We need to prioritize everything that leads to more connection to community, to one's own culture and identity, and, again, to love and compassion.

Earlier this spring, before I decided to run, I visited the Strathcona camp and listened to a group of the people living there tell me their stories.

I heard about how they felt safer in their tents than they did in the cockroach-infested rooms in the Downtown East Side from which they had escaped.

I heard heart-wrenching stories about just hanging on.

My number one priority with the federal government is to get them to provide more funds for public housing, and to fully restore their responsibilities to the people of Vancouver.

With the recent announcement from Prime Minister Justin Trudeau that we will now have a minister dedicated to the housing file (for the first time in a generation) I see more hope for the future.

## **MENTAL HEALTH / ADDICTIONS**

My number one priority with the provincial government is to redouble efforts to treat mental health with the same importance as physical health.

It's time for our leaders to do their part to remove the stigma associated with mental health and addictions so that people can heal.

Many members of my family have had mental health challenges, some more challenging than others.

I remember when I was in high school when my brother James was in the psychiatric hospital after a drug overdose. He was in grade 8.

He's spent his life struggling with schizophrenia.

After school, I rode my bike almost every day to go and see him.

I still remember the smell of that place.

That hospital was alienating. Being there broke my heart.

It's no wonder people thought it was a good idea to shut these places down.

When he got out of the hospital, he moved to live in Belleville Ontario, where my dad lived. My dad was a public school teacher.

My dad found him a small house to live in over 30 years ago and he's been there ever since.

But so many others don't have this privilege.

So when Kennedy Stewart spends all of his time advocating for decriminalization and clean supply of drugs, I say "yes!"

But this isn't the end of the story.

We need a holistic, comprehensive approach to this crisis.

When seeking solutions, we don't want a return to the kind of hospital my brother James was in.

We've learned a lot in the last half century about treatments for mental health that are more respectful of human dignity.

It's those types of treatments that we, as a society, need to make major investments in, and as mayor I will make that a key priority in my engagement with the provincial and federal governments.

What is needed, most of all, is for our society to take the collective responsibility to care for those who have trouble caring for themselves.

Rooted in love for our neighbours, and in the recognition of the equal dignity of every human being.

## **GREEN CITY**

And this brings us to the next issue. The health and vitality of our planet.

We all depend on it and we all have a part to play to solve our climate crisis.

I have worked hard on climate-related issues for quite some time.

I co-chaired the first national campaign — the “Green Shift,” — that promised to bring in a carbon tax, taxing more of what you burn, and less of what you earn.

I also co-founded Pacific Future Energy, bringing together:

- two former National Chiefs of the Assembly of First Nations,
- Judge Wally Oppal
- and Dave Coles, the leader of the energy workers for 20 years, who got arrested on Parliament Hill for protesting bitumen on our water.

Our task was to disrupt the oil industry by building the world’s greenest refinery on the north-west coast.

This concept was endorsed by the Green Party.

This led to co-founding Kanata Clean Energy, which is chaired by Chief Joe Dion of the Frog Lake First Nation in Alberta, who have recently invested a majority stake in the project.

Kanata Clean Energy will be building the first natural gas plant in Canada that will produce electricity with zero emissions.

Now, running for Mayor, I want to tackle climate change, in part, through land use reform.

Cities around the world are discovering that one of the biggest threats standing in the way of progress on the fight against climate change is continued suburban sprawl, growing further outward in search of affordability.

And many of our leaders — our city councillors who call themselves progressives — vote against new housing here in Vancouver, forcing this housing to be built elsewhere in the Lower Mainland, forcing everyone into their cars, requiring more asphalt and less green-space, and polluting our airshed.

As Mayor, I will work to build thriving, walkable neighbourhoods here in our city. I will also use city-owned land to build affordable housing.

This is key to being a green City and to maximizing our quality of life.

## **TRANSIT & TRANSPORTATION**

Great, green cities are also defined by great transit and public transportation.

I have a lot of experience in this area.

I worked to secure the federal funding for the Canada Line and to develop the Millennium Line.

I helped negotiate a 30 per cent reduction in the track rates West Coast Express was charged by Canadian Pacific Railway.

And I worked with Vancouver's airport to cut their rent, compared with Toronto and Montreal, saving YVR over a billion dollars over 40 years.

So when I see our Mayor voting for the SkyTrain expansion in Surrey and Langley without a commitment to build the Broadway subway all the way to UBC, at Westbrook Mall, I see a Mayor who simply isn't looking out for our interests as his primary concern.

**As Mayor, I will get a commitment to accelerate Skytrain to UBC and commit to shovels in the ground by the end of my first term.**

## **STATE OF OUR DOWNTOWN**

The other issue we need to talk about is our downtown.

I love our downtown. I live across the bridge from downtown, and I'm a small business owner on Granville Street.

In fact, when I was a kid, I always wanted to live downtown in a bigger city than St. Thomas, Ontario where I grew up.

I was lucky when I went to university and got to study and then work in Ottawa.

I lived a few blocks from Parliament Hill and could walk to work, to the grocery store, to places like the Byward Market, where I could meet friends on outdoor patios and enjoy live music.

I never wanted to be away from that kind of energy again.

When I moved to BC before the 1996 provincial election, I lived in Port Moody, and worked downtown Vancouver.

Port Moody is a wonderful community, but when I wasn't on the West Coast Express, I was in a car, often for a couple of hours a day.

I just couldn't deal with it.

So I was kind of excited on the day when Marty Zlotnik, who is here today, approached my then-wife to seek an NPA nomination for Mayor of Vancouver!

(By the way - Christy and Sam Sullivan are both here tonight. This is what we do - we bring people together!)

Running for this nomination meant moving to a new home near City Hall, and a 30 minute walk to work.

Well, the campaign didn't work out, but I got to live the urban life I love, here in Vancouver, for the past 16 years!

I got more time with my son. I lost weight. I went to way more public events. I slept better.

These are the things that happen when you get to live in Vancouver.

But this urban life certainly has its challenges lately.

On my way to work, I have seen more broken windows in the past few months. I have seen more businesses closing shop and giving up.

We need to make our downtown more family-friendly, fun and vibrant.

Invest more heavily in arts and culture.

And free up the police to tackle serious crime.

As Mayor, I will create a “Family Friendly Downtown” initiative, focused on the principle that a thriving downtown is a safer downtown.

We will also create a Commissioner of the Night-time Economy and Culture, elected by the stakeholders — including the business improvement association, the residents associations, arts organizations, to name a few — who will be tasked with thinking outside the box.

There are many larger cities around the world who now have someone who does this job and we can learn from their experiences to date.

One of the things this Commissioner will be tasked with is to make a stretch of downtown’s Granville Street an all weather-protected, well lit, pedestrian-friendly street. Think of what’s been done in North Vancouver at their shipyards.

But this is only one example of what we can do.

## **RECONCILIATION**

As we acknowledged earlier tonight, we are on unceded territories.

There is much more to do to advance reconciliation.

Colonization of these lands happened only a few generations ago.

For those of us who are not indigenous, it’s very important for all us to deepen our understanding of the intergenerational trauma caused by colonization, and residential schools in particular, and how we can advance reconciliation in our communities.

Now is the time for healing, for action, and for a new path forward.

One of the most significant developments in our recent history will be the Senakw (PRO-NOUNCED ‘SNOCK’) development, near the Burrard bridge.

By building this new community, First Nations are doing what Vancouver City Council can’t: respecting and maximizing the proper use of our land, and building the kind of housing that our city needs!

Thousands of Vancouver renters will finally have more options for security of housing, rather than having to precariously live in someone’s basement.

I will work to be a respectful, collaborative partner with our First Nations on this important project.

## **HOW ARE WE GOING TO DO ALL OF THIS?**

This gets to, how are we going to accomplish these things?

One of the ways is to build a political organization unlike any other party in this city.

A broadly-based, democratic, “big tent” party that unabashedly wants to include people rather than exclude them.

One that wants to focus on Vancouver’s future rather than get lost in nostalgia about Vancouver’s past.

We’ve seen what has happened to the NPA and Vision Vancouver.

At one time — when they were winning — they were both inclusive, large-scale community organizations where people felt welcomed, and they could make their case heard and get something done.

Both of those parties

- Lost their way,
- Lost their ability to bring people together under one roof,
- Lost their ability to listen to feedback, and then
- Lost their ability to lead.

AND THEN WHAT HAPPENED?

**WE GOT KENNEDY STEWART.**

A man who ran as an independent, who can’t get council to work with him like he promised.

It’s a tragedy.

Mr. Stewart’s consistent failure to lead has brought polarization and division at a key moment when we need to come together.

This Mayor just can’t get anything done because he can’t bring people together.

It’s only when we’re together that we can listen to the voices who are drowned out.

It’s only when we’re together that we’re forced to learn from each other.

It’s only when we’re together, that we can usher in real change

**BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER:** This is what I have spent a lifetime doing.

You can see it in this room.

Our team is led by young people who came from the Greens, from COPE, from YES Vancouver, from Vision Vancouver and the NPA.

Our team reflects the beautiful and diverse mosaic that made Vancouver so successful in the first place.

**We all share a can-do spirit.**

**WE SHARE** A commitment to **CHOOSE PROGRESS** rather than polarization.

**WE SHARE A COMMITMENT TO CHOOSE OPTIMISM AND HOPE AND UNITY.**

And, importantly, we share a commitment to actually **GET THINGS DONE.**

By supporting me for Mayor of Vancouver, you are **CHOOSING PROGRESS.**

- **Progress** on good, affordable homes.
- **Progress** on saving the lives being stolen by addiction.
- **Progress** on new transit and infrastructure.
- **Progress** on being a creative, vibrant city full of energy that welcomes people from all walks of life.

**CHOOSING PROGRESS** is why we're here today.

**THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR BEING HERE, BUT THIS IS JUST THE START.**

We're going to need your help in the coming year.

This is going to be a big challenge, and we can't do it alone.

We need all of you to get involved.

We are going to run with a team.

I will be seeking the nomination for PROGRESS VANCOUVER, and we will need strong, capable Council, Park Board and School board candidates.

Maybe some of these candidates are already in this room.

We are also going to need your help, by hosting coffee parties, policy roundtables and fundraisers.

We need this to be the most comprehensive, grass-roots effort that this city has ever seen.

**THANK YOU AGAIN!**

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT, AND YOUR COMMITMENT TO PROGRESS!**

**Vancouver's ... best ... days .... are ... going to be ... just .... around the corner.**