



Burnaby Council Candidate: Pietro Calendino - Burnaby Citizens Association

Pietro Calendino came to Canada in 1959 and completed High School and a Masters degree in Languages at UBC. He was a teaching assistant at UBC and taught high school for 30 years. Pietro has lived in Burnaby for 49 years and has served as School Trustee, MLA and now Councillor and Director of Metro Vancouver Board. He serves on the Healthier Communities Partnership, on the Fraser Health Collaborative Health Committee, and on other organizations. He has volunteered as a driver for shut-in seniors and people with mobility issues.

What skills would you bring to the Councillor's position and how would those apply to the business community?

I have acquired invaluable knowledge and experience in my years of public service which give me the skills to analyze, reflect and respond appropriately to the needs of all constituents, including the business community. The Board of Trade is the business development arm of Council and I have wholeheartedly supported the financial assistance and the recent increase that the City provides. I am fully aware of the financial strain that property taxes have on small and medium businesses and I have supported the participation of our CFO at the Property Tax advisory committee that is looking at the highest and best value legislation and the effect it has on property taxes for small businesses. Burnaby has developed into a hub for a number of highly specialized industries and I would like to support this direction. I know that jurisdictions outside of Canada provide temporary tax incentives to attract new business, and perhaps it is time to explore that at home as well.

What strategies do you think the City of Burnaby should adopt to foster the growth and success of our local businesses?

To start, continue providing BBOT with more tools to attract new business investments in Burnaby. I am aware that it is difficult for prospective employees to find housing in the city. In the Planning and Development Committee (which I chair) we have approved or are in the process of approving some 13000 housing units, the majority of which are rental from affordable at 40% below CMHC median to market. My committee produced the major housing policies on Inclusionary Housing (20% of all units) and the Tenant Assistance Policy that protects current rents in the transition period and once back into a new unit. Housing does not materialize overnight, but in the next five years or so, the majority of these 13000 units should be occupied by owners or tenants. Many more projects are in-stream which will have many more thousands of housing units.

My Committee reviewed the Lochdale and Bainbridge Urban Villages which will create another 5000 to 7000 more housing units of different forms. My committee also started the public consultation on laneway houses and other gentler forms of housing. Gentle densification will be included in the up-coming Official Community Plan Review. I have also asked Planning staff to start reviewing policy and bylaws to allow multiple storey commercial/industrial projects to ensure that we have enough floor space for future growth and needs.

I will work to facilitate the establishment of more industries with high paying jobs like the hydrogen R&D, film industry, high tech, biomed, and the developing climate-change related CO2 capture field.

How would you propose the City of Burnaby manage its continued densification and the development of its town centers?

I think the City of Burnaby has the best thought-out densification strategy among the Metro Vancouver region because the town centres are created around the major rapid transit nodes. Other municipalities have started adopting our policies. The Inclusionary 20% will have to continue and be periodically reviewed to see whether it needs to be amended. Our Density Bonus Policy is an excellent tool that benefits the developer and even more the City, in that it provides needed funds for affordable housing and for infrastructures, the cost of which would otherwise have to be added to the property taxes. Most developments are CD projects which means they will also be employment hubs that can increase membership to the BBOT.

Burnaby is a desirable place to live, work and play but we have run out of developable residential lands, so the higher density in town centres and lesser density in Urban Villages along transit corridors is necessary and in line with the Metro Vancouver Regional Growth Strategy 2050. What we will have to improve on is public transit and transportation. We will continue to collaborate with Translink to increase North-South routes and we will push for the early implementation of the Rapid Transit on the Willingdon Corridor to Metrotown. I will also ensure that we make improvements on active transportation to reduce congestion and GHG emissions.

If elected, what would be your top goals for your coming term in office?

My top goals will be to continue addressing the housing crisis and affordability in general. We are making good progress, but there is still much work to do. If there is not available housing, businesses will have problems hiring and retaining employees and I want to minimize that by shortening the building approval process. Climate change is the challenge of this century and I will dedicate much energy into adaptation and mitigation measures. I will also dedicate myself to reconciliation and in learning from local Indigenous Peoples on how to apply nature-based practices in what we do in order to preserve the planet and the human race. I have mentioned above some methods of increasing employment and work spaces in Burnaby. In short, I will concentrate on making life better for all.