



Burnaby Council Candidate: Reah Arora - Burnaby Citizens Association

Reah Arora is a community builder and organizer with a decade of experience in grassroots politics and labour. She served in Alberta's government in the Office of the Premier and currently works for the BC Federation of Labour as Director, Organizing and Campaigns. She is a member of the Panjabi community and knows first-hand the difficulties marginalized people face navigating life and finding a sense of belonging here. This motivates her to make Burnaby one of the most vibrant and inclusive cities in the region, where life is more affordable and people have access to the services they count on.

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

My parents owned and operated a small business close to Kensington Square for 12 years and my sister and I worked there in our late teens and as young adults. I owned my own small business in my early twenties and know firsthand the importance of local small businesses which provide access for community. With all of the diversity in Burnaby, many families are the sole providers for their multigenerational households and face financial difficulty when beginning their business endeavours. It is important that people have the ability to open their businesses swiftly and without delay especially when they need building permits and have to pay rent throughout those delays.

I also recognize that even though we can find many restaurants and cultural spots where communities can go and enjoy food and entertainment from their own homeland, many communities still don't have that representation in Burnaby. I know this is key to inclusion and the business community is a key part of it. From options for big event venues, furniture or clothing stores and cultural spaces to community grocery stores and cultural entertainment spots. I envision an inclusive Burnaby that boasts all of its cultures through business and gathering places for all its communities.

I look forward to working with businesses within the city - to help develop effective bylaws that serve all Burnaby residents and keep our communities vibrant and inclusive. It must be said that I am supportive of all efforts to create a more sustainable and low-carbon community. As a director at the BC Federation of Labour, I am acutely aware of the link between good jobs and healthy communities. We know that businesses perform better when workers aren't struggling.

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

Among a few other things, we're looking to invest in alternative business structures that make it more accessible for Burnaby residents to create a business together. A large part of that will be in providing a wider variety of information and services, particularly related to starting a co-op or converting an existing business into one. By opening up access in the way businesses, co-ops, and other organizations can be run, we bring new ideas into the marketplace.

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

We know that Burnaby is poised to grow by a considerable amount in the short term and while development is a necessity we need to ensure that existing businesses are not priced out due to this densification. Part of this can be done by providing relevant information for new business interests, like where geographically operating their business might make sense so as not to end up in competition with other businesses from the same space. We need to ensure that small businesses - especially those serving underserved demographics - can continue to thrive and compete in an evolving economy.

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

Burnaby needs more affordable housing, co-ops, and access to essential services. Essential services for everyone will mean addressing accessibility through many demographics like age and cultural appropriateness for the communities Burnaby serves to name a few. We need to make sure that the people who work in Burnaby are able to live here. Additionally, that people who have lived here their entire lives like many seniors and mature families aren't priced out of the city including youth and students who are looking to gain independence and grow their own households however that looks for them. A steady permanent rental supply will be important. Addressing housing is my number one goal.