



## **Burnaby Council Candidate: Tara Shushtarian - Burnaby Green Party**

An M. A. from JNU in New Delhi, I've worked in myriad roles from mortgage consultant, to copywriter, to teacher. A climate and social justice activist, I've worked on many campaigns including the BC Poverty Reduction Plan; climate campaigns to get municipalities to declare Climate Emergencies and endorse the FFNPT; and the "All on Board" campaign for affordable transit. I also worked with the BC Centre For Palliative Care as a South Asian advisor for their Advanced Care Plan. Currently, I sit on Burnaby's Environment Committee, the West Coast Climate Action Network (WE-CAN) board, and the Fair Vote Canada board.

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

As I have worn many hats as a teacher (Malaysia), script writer and mortgage consultant (India), and been involved with many social and environmental organizations in Canada, I bring a multi-dimensional perspective to decision making. I view projects with a nuanced equity and sustainability lens. This is because for a good business to develop, you need to understand the requirements of people / consumers and bring goods or services to them in a timely and cost-effective manner. I will manage and navigate the relationship with Council and the business community so that there are the best outcomes for the people of Burnaby.

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

Burnaby is uniquely located and is at the geographic centre of metro Vancouver which gives us the opportunity of being a thriving central hub. There has to be a pro-active business development program between the city and businesses so that we can satisfy and encourage employment in the city.

- Expedite the permitting process for businesses. I have friends in the software tech sector who wanted to start their own consultancy firm but find the processes are tedious. The city could have an interactive process that has simple language and less jargon so that you are being inclusive of everyone. Have a reasonable time frame within which to issue permits and have City staff liaison with the business community so that there is a dialogue to see the success of a business and what are the barriers.
- As many people are opting for an active, sustainable lifestyle, location is another concern. There is no easy accessibility of transit and active transportation to commercial and industrial zones. Business and consumer parking is also essential not only for private vehicles but car share. The City could start developing infrastructure for these locations.
- Development of the urban villages or 15-minute cities where all your housing, healthcare, childcare, groceries, restaurants and other amenities are within a 15-minute radius of walking, biking or transit. The interconnectedness of these villages to each other and the major town centers, can be a boon for businesses. Each urban village can have its unique characteristic and this would encourage engagement of micro- businesses not only in the local communities but foster a healthy interchange between communities. Businesses in order to thrive need goods and people an accessibility can be a major game changer. For example, I could live at the Lochdale urban village but be working for a Chiropractor in the Bainbridge village. I would use goods and services in both places.
- As we undertake retrofitting to achieve goals of being net zero in the future, allocate industrial land for green businesses. Assembling of prefab homes, insulation products like glazed windows, locally manufactured heat pumps, developing recycled sustainable biofuel like wood chips that are locally sourced to be used in district energy systems, the list can go on. These businesses could also serve as a supply centre for the lower mainland.

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

- The town centres must not only have commercial towers but a wide variety of housing options like affordable purpose-built rentals, townhomes, co-ops, social housing and rowhomes.
- If the City wisely densifies then you can avoid gentrification of the area. Old pop and mom shops or nascent businesses like a Ukrainian bakery will not be priced out of the location. They bring character to the centers.
- In residential towers, apportion certain floors to businesses, from a bank to a Starbucks or a childcare facility.
- Develop land use realm not only around active transportation but greenspaces, water bodies with rainwater harvesting mechanisms where communities can gather.

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

- Tackling the housing crisis and working with different levels of government for increased housing supply.
- Development of interconnected active transportation and transportation infrastructure of urban villages or 15-minute cities.
- Expediting processes for retrofitting buildings and homes thereby reducing energy consumption and costs and giving an impetus for sustainable businesses.