



Meet Richmond's MLAs



Three newcomers and a veteran
representing us in Victoria

03

Photos submitted

Three new BC NDP MLAs (Aman Singh, Henry Yao and Kelly Greene) will join veteran BC Liberal MLA Teresa Wat in the provincial legislature when they are sworn in this week.

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Seeing beyond

Editor's Note

The Oct. 24 provincial election gave the governing NDP a stronger mandate, aided by the election of three NDP MLAs in Richmond. While Liberal incumbent Teresa Wat was re-elected for a third straight term in the riding of Richmond North Centre, the other three ridings were won by New

Democrats—Aman Singh in Richmond-Queensborough, Kelly Greene in Richmond-Steveston, and Henry Yao in Richmond South Centre. The results represent a historic shift locally, with the NDP represented in the Legislative Assembly by local MLAs for the first time since current city

councillor Harold Steves was elected to represent Richmond in the 1970s. In this edition of the *Richmond Sentinel*, recapping the provincial election, we introduce (or re-introduce) you to the folks who will represent you in Victoria.

—Don Fennell, Editor-in-Chief

Final count confirms three NDP MLAs for Richmond

By HANNAH SCOTT

Local Journalism Initiative reporter

Richmond has clearly embraced the orange wave. A historic result, the Oct. 24 provincial election saw three of Richmond's four ridings flip from the BC Liberals to the NDP.

After the final count was completed in early November, the NDP's Aman Singh won the Richmond-Queensborough riding with 47.65 per cent of votes compared to 39.15 per cent for Liberal incumbent Jas Johal. Mail-in and absentee ballots totalled 6,197, widening Singh's lead after election night.

In Richmond-Steveston, NDP candidate (and city councillor) Kelly Greene won the seat with 52.07 per cent of votes after 7,911 mail-in and absentee ballots were counted. Liberal candidate Matt Pitcairn received 45.59 per cent. Greene had a similar lead of 51 per cent to 46 per cent on election night.

After counting 5,057 mail-in and absentee ballots in Richmond South Centre, NDP candidate Henry Yao maintained his election night lead over Liberal candidate (and Richmond city councillor) Alexa Loo to win the riding by a margin of less than 200 votes—50.67 per cent to 49.33 per cent.

Richmond North Centre incumbent Teresa Wat was the lone Liberal to win, holding her seat with 51.26 per cent of votes compared to the NDP's Jaeden Dela Torre with 39.83 per cent. The final count adds 6,052 mail-in and absentee ballots to the election night figures.

Across Richmond, voter turnout was low. Richmond-Steveston saw the highest turnout, with 55.95 per cent of registered voters casting a valid ballot, followed by Richmond-Queensborough with 49.61 per cent. In the other two ridings, only around 40 per cent of registered voters participated in the election.

After the final provincial count, the NDP holds 57 seats, the Liberals 28 and the Greens two.

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Photos submitted

Richmond has elected three NDP MLAs to join incumbent Liberal MLA Teresa Wat (left) in the BC Legislative Assembly: Aman Singh, Kelly Greene, and Henry Yao.

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How Richmond voted

Richmond North Centre: Final count

PARTY	CANDIDATE	VOTES	PERCENTAGE
BC Liberals	Teresa Wat	7,675	51.26%
BC NDP	Jaeden Dela Torre	5,964	39.83%
BC Green Party	Vernon Wang	1,333	8.90%

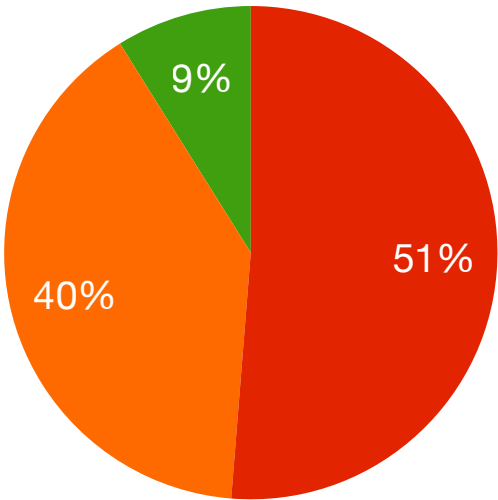
TOTAL VOTES: 14,972

Preliminary results:	
Teresa Wat (BC Liberals):	4,549 (50.78%)
Jaeden Dela Torre (BC NDP):	3,568 (39.83%)
Vernon Wang (BC Green Party):	841 (9.39%)
TOTAL VOTES:	8,958
• does not include 6,052 mail-in or absentee ballots	

2017 Election:	
Teresa Wat (BC Liberals):	7,916 (52.48%)
Lyren Chiu (BC NDP):	5,135 (34.04%)
Ryan Marciniw (BC Green Party):	1,579 (10.47%)
Dong Pan (Independent):	336 (2.23%)
John Crocock (BCAP):	117 (0.78%)
TOTAL VOTES:	15,083

- The lone Liberal to win a Richmond seat, Richmond North Centre candidate Teresa Wat became Richmond’s longest-serving MLA after winning the riding she has held since 2013
- Wat received a similar number of votes (7,675)

- and percentage of the total votes (51.26 per cent) as in the 2017 election (when she received 7,916 votes, 52.48 per cent)
- Support for the BC Green Party dropped slightly in Richmond North Centre, where candidate Ver-



- non Wang received 8.90 per cent of the total votes
- In comparison, NDP support surged in this election, with Dela Torre receiving 39.83 per cent of votes, a more than five per cent increase from candidate Lyren Chiu’s 2017 showing

Richmond South Centre: Final count

PARTY	CANDIDATE	VOTES	PERCENTAGE
BC NDP	Henry Yao	6,743	50.67%
BC Liberals	Alexa Loo	6,564	49.33%

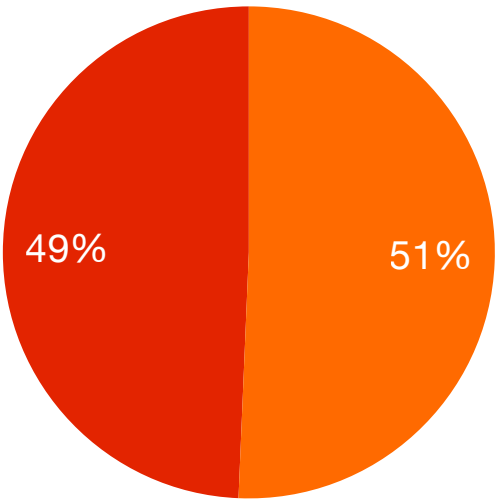
TOTAL VOTES: 13,307

Preliminary results:	
Henry Yao (BC NDP):	4,137 (50.76%)
Alexa Loo (BC Liberals):	4,013 (49.24%)
TOTAL VOTES:	8,150
• does not include 5,057 mail-in or absentee ballots	

2017 Election:	
Linda Reid (BC Liberals):	6,914 (48.72%)
Chak Au (BC NDP):	5,716 (40.28%)
Greg Powell (BC Green Party):	1,561 (11.00%)
TOTAL VOTES:	4,191

- Previously a Liberal stronghold (held by long-time MLA Linda Reid after its creation in 2015), in this election, the seat was up for grabs after Reid’s retirement from politics earlier this year
- Support for the Liberals held strong with candi-

- date (and city councillor) Alexa Loo receiving 49.33 per cent of votes
- The absence of a third-party candidate proved helpful for NDP candidate and new MLA Henry Yao, who won the riding with 50.67 per cent of

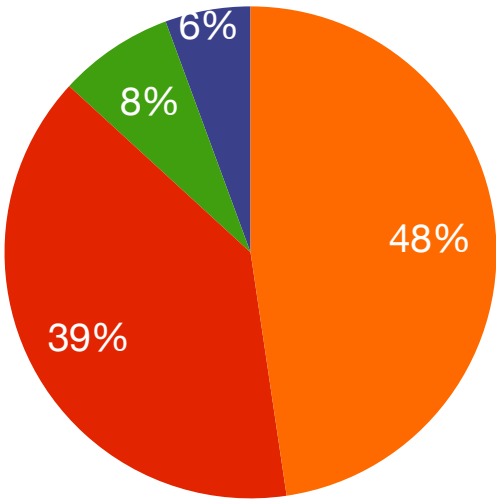


- votes—just 179 more than Loo
- Preliminary results had Yao in the lead by an even slimmer margin: 4,137 to Loo’s 4,013, a difference of less than two per cent of votes

Richmond-Queensborough: Final count

PARTY	CANDIDATE	VOTES	PERCENTAGE
BC NDP	Aman Singh	9,406	47.65%
BC Liberals	Jas Johal	7,728	39.15%
BC Green Party	Earl Einarson	1,496	7.58%
BC Conservatives	Kay Hale	1,108	5.61%

TOTAL VOTES: 19,738



Preliminary results:	
Aman Singh (BC NDP):	6,275 (46.34%)
Jas Johal (BC Liberals):	5,343 (39.46%)
Earl Einarson (BC Green Party):	1,071 (7.91%)
Kay Hale (BC Conservatives):	852 (6.29%)
TOTAL VOTES:	13,541
• does not include 6,197 mail-in or absentee ballots	

2017 Election:	
Jas Johal (BC Liberals):	8,218 (41.43%)
Aman Singh (BC NDP):	8,084 (40.75%)
Michael Wolfe (BC Green Party):	2,524 (12.72%)
Kay Hale (BC Conservatives):	694 (3.50%)
Lawrence Chen (NRP):	318 (1.60%)
TOTAL VOTES:	19,838

- In the 2017 election, BC NDP candidate Aman Singh lost to BC Liberal candidate Jas Johal by just 134 votes
- In this election, Singh won by a larger margin of 1,678 votes
- Support for the NDP increased across the province, including in Richmond-Queensbor-

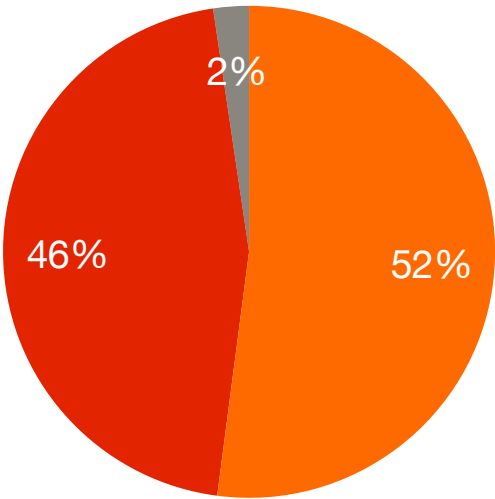
- ough where Singh received 47.65 per cent of the total votes (compared to 40.75 per cent in 2017)
- Johal received 39.15 per cent, a slight decrease from his 2017 share of 41.43 per cent
 - Support for the other parties shifted slightly: BC Green Party candidate Earl Einarson received 7.58 per cent compared to 12.72 per cent

- for city Coun. Michael Wolfe as the party's candidate in 2017
- BC Conservative candidate Kay Hale received 5.61 per cent of votes, improving upon her own showing in 2017, when she received 3.50 per cent of the total votes

Richmond-Steveston: Final count

PARTY	CANDIDATE	VOTES	PERCENTAGE
BC NDP	Kelly Greene	10,733	52.07%
BC Liberals	Matt Pitcairn	9,398	45.59%
Independent	Vince Lee	483	2.34%

TOTAL VOTES: 20,614



Preliminary results:	
Kelly Greene (BC NDP):	6,468 (50.89%)
Matt Pitcairn (BC Liberals):	5,868 (46.16%)
Vince Lee (Independent):	375 (2.95%)
TOTAL VOTES:	12,711
• does not include 7,911 mail-in or absentee ballots	

2017 Election:	
John Yap (BC Liberals):	10,332 (47.60%)
Kelly Greene (BC NDP):	8,542 (39.35%)
Roy Sakata (BC Green Party):	2,833 (13.05%)
TOTAL VOTES:	21,707

- After losing to incumbent BC Liberal MLA John Yap in the 2017 election, NDP candidate Kelly Greene again sought a provincial seat, this time against Liberal candidate Matt Pitcairn

- This riding saw the largest surge of NDP support (more than 12.5 per cent), with Greene receiving 52.07 per cent of the total votes
- In 2017, she received 39.35 per cent—which

was an increase of more than ten per cent over the NDP's showing in 2013

Aman Singh: Richmond-Queensborough

By DON FENNEL
@rmdsentinel

What was supposed to be a five minute meeting with John Horgan wound up being more than an hour. But that appointment in 2016 convinced Aman Singh to join the BC New Democrats, and to run for a seat in the provincial legislature.

The newly-elected MLA for Richmond-Queensborough, Singh was struck by Horgan's genuine nature.

"What a really empathetic, great person to be around," he says of BC's premier and leader of the NDP.

After narrowly losing to Liberal Jas Johal in the 2017 election, Singh returned to his successful law practice to which he's devoted much during the past two decades. He was in the throes of wrapping up any loose ends at the practice last week, after winning the riding seat in this year's Oct. 24 election.

"It's still surreal, perhaps partly because with the pandemic there's no meetings in-person or ceremonies yet," he says.

As a kid growing up Hong Kong, Singh was fascinated with local politics and world events—something his parents eagerly advanced.

"They not only supported this, but helped spark my interest in politics and law by always taking the time to explain the news to me, and encouraging me to join in on lively dinner table debates," he says.

Singh is "grateful and privileged" to have grown up in several different countries, and thus able to engage in several difficult cultures and converse in many languages including Punjabi, Cantonese and English. The family's journey began in Thailand where an uncle was the head priest of the



Photos submitted

Though he is set to become a rookie MLA, Aman Singh (pictured above with his wife and two dogs) brings a wealth of worldly experience to his new job representing the people of Richmond-Queensborough.

Sikh temple and encouraged his dad to move the family there. Soon, it was on to Hong Kong where young Aman spent the great majority of his formative years before again moving with his family to Richmond in 1989.

"We had cousins living here, and all of my dad's business friends had moved here as well," ex-

plains Singh, forever grateful for his parents.

"They were so incredibly ahead of their time," he says. "My mom was a beacon for the community that women in Hong Kong would come to for support. She led her life based on sympathy and that's what she taught me and my brother. We took that to heart."

He lost his mom just over two years ago, and as a result can't help but feel a bit bittersweet about his election victory. He knows she would have been so proud.

Now his dad is battling Alzheimer's. Ever indebted, Singh strives to follow in his dad's footsteps as someone dedicated to giving back.

"My father did that all his life. Most of the Punjabi population in Hong Kong was very working class. Starting out as a security guard and working on ships, he was a real entrepreneur who ended up working for himself and opening his own travel agency. People in the old days would travel back to India once every three or four years, and he would give them credit so they could pay for their tickets over the course of a year or two. That's the kind of kindness and empathy my parents instilled in us."

A progressive lawyer who appreciates the



AMAN SINGH

From Page 6

importance of advocacy, Singh was afforded the opportunity to meet many "great" politicians at all levels before finally entering the political forum himself. He says he has also been fortunate to engage in many great discussions, even with those whose political views differed from his own. He grew to admire the likes of former federal NDP leader Jack Layton and has become good friends with the party's current leader Jagmeet Singh.

Upon being sworn in as an MLA, Singh becomes the first sitting member of the legislature to wear a turban. It's an honour he carries with a great deal of pride.

"Gratitude is what I feel," he says. "To have 10-year-old Aman seeing someone like me in the legislature, how encouraging that would have been. Now, I'm excited about the kind of world my daughter will grow up in. She represents so many cultures herself."

Singh appreciates every day he and his wife Katrina—who is of Scottish descent—are able to spend with one-year-old Leni.

Along with his wife, a hair and make-up artist who works primarily in the fashion and film industry, he also shares a love of music—particularly folk—and enjoys family outings with their two



dogs Charlie and Dave. That both are rescue dogs further speaks to the type of person Singh strives to be on a daily basis.

"My parents were refugees who had to leave

their home with nothing and managed to build a better life in a new country. I strive to make them proud in everything I do."

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PROPOSED 2020 PAVING LOCATION DETAILS

Garden City and Alderbridge Way	Intersection
8000 Block Westminster Hwy	East Bound Lanes
Bridgeport Road and Viking Way	Intersection
6000 Block Cooney Road	Granville Avenue to Westminster Highway
6000 Block Buswell Street	Granville Avenue to Westminster Highway
11000 Block No.5 Road	Steveston Highway to Rice Mill Road
12000 Block No.5 Road	Rice Mill Road to Dike Road
Horseshoe Way	No.5 Road to Coppersmith Way
Elmbridge Way	West Bound Lanes
Vibration Complaints	Spot repairs at various locations

Work hours will be 7:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. on weekdays, and 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. on weekends. Night time work hours will be from 7:00 p.m. to 5:00 a.m. (typically).

Traffic will be reduced to single-lane and there may be temporary lane closures. Delays may occur. The use of an alternate route is strongly encouraged.

This work is weather dependent and dates are subject to change without notice.

The scope of the advertised work may be adjusted or cancelled in line with available funding.

Questions may be directed to Wasim Memon, Supervisor, Engineering Inspections, at **604-276-4189**, or visit the City's paving program web page at www.richmond.ca/services/rdws/projects/pavingprogram.

www.richmond.ca



YouTube



Kelly Greene: Richmond-Steveston

By HANNAH SCOTT
Local Journalism Initiative reporter

Kelly Greene likes to start her day with at least one very large cup of tea.

"I get my tea from Nikaido in Steveston, and they've got so many great really distinct blends," she says.

Her morning routine pairs a love of tea with a passion for supporting local businesses—which Greene says is especially important during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"You can buy something on Amazon, but Amazon isn't going to help you out when your child is in soccer and you need a donation for the soccer club," she adds.

The newly-elected MLA for Richmond-Steveston was raised in the neighbourhood, having attended Diefenbaker elementary and Boyd secondary schools. As a youngster, she remembers going to the end of Trites Road to pick blackberries, which her family would then make into pie and jam.

A member of several 'buddy' clubs in elementary school, where she helped supervise and look after younger grades, Greene says she joined "pretty much all the clubs" in high school.

"We had a little convenience store at Hugh Boyd—we called it 'Hugh's.' We were the class that opened it, and I was one of the leaders on that project," she says. "We (also) had the greenhouse users group, we did a lot of plant activities in the little greenhouse in the back of one of the science labs, and that was fun."

Growing up, Greene definitely didn't envision a future in politics. In Kindergarten, she wanted to be a teacher. By the time she finished high school, her goal had shifted to being a novelist.

"I really hadn't thought about politics as something I would do. Politics always seemed like something somebody else did," she says.

Greene first became involved with politics in 2016 as part of a parent group that formed in response to the Richmond school closures and then became active in the community. At the time, she was a stay-at-home mom with an infant.

"If you want to talk about juggling priorities and multitasking, that was it," she says with a laugh.

Greene's community advocacy for education led her to seek election as an MLA in the 2017 provincial election, where she came second to incumbent BC Liberal MLA John Yap in the



Photos submitted

A Richmond city councillor for the last two years, newly-elected Richmond-Steveston MLA Kelly Greene (pictured casting her ballot with her three children) initially found her political passion as an education advocate.

See Page 9

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RICHMOND AT A GLANCE

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KELLY GREENE

From Page 8

Richmond-Steveston riding. She was subsequently elected as a city councillor, a role she has held since 2018. Since then, she's learned many lessons, the most important of which is to ask questions, she says.

She and her husband are parents to three young children, raising them in the same neighbourhood they remember exploring as kids.

"My husband's grandma used to live in Steveston. They would ride their bikes in, and get fish and chips, and fly their kite at Garry Point," Greene says. "And that's the same thing we can do with our kids today, decades later: riding our bikes into Steveston, and going to the library, and getting some donuts, and going for a walk on the boardwalk. Those are still things that the kids love and they're going to remember that when they're older."

She describes Steveston as having a strong sense of community, and lists Garry Point and Dave's Fish and Chips as favourite spots. She's also passionate about protecting the environment, and loves camping with her family. The responsibility of leaving a place better than you found it is something Greene learned from her parents, who she says "have always done a really good job of explaining that we're responsible for more than just ourselves."

Another thing she picked up from her parents was a strong sense of family and support. As a parent, she is keen to pass along some skills and interests to her kids, including her love of reading. She also enjoys cooking and baking, both

"foundational" family recipes and experimenting with new ones. And she's an avid gardener.

"I like to grow things that I can eat, and I think it's a great learning experience for the kids," she says. "They really learn where food comes from—it doesn't come from a cellophane package."

In her spare time, she enjoys hanging out with her husband and watching comedy on TV, "because life is hard, and it's nice to have a laugh."

Recently they've also been building things out of Lego, which is a favourite pastime of her kids.

"They particularly love it when Mommy and

Daddy build them something cool, and then they wake up in the morning and there's something cool on the coffee table that they can play with," she says.

In terms of a potential political future, she says she focuses on the here and now—trying to make Richmond and BC the best it can be at this time. But the motivation behind Greene's dedication to her community is clear: she wants to see positive change.

"A lot of moms think, 'somebody needs to do this.' At a certain point, that somebody is you."

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RAPS COMMUNITY REPORT Caring for the animals who care for us

Plan ahead for pets' well-being



Pat
Johnson

Happy endings often come after painful experiences. As people age or their home life changes, it can cause disruption in the lives of their companion animals.

Such was the case with Mr. Meows, whose idyllic life was upended when his person moved to a nursing facility. The grandchildren were unable to care for the cat, who is himself a senior at age 11, and they were grateful that the RAPS Animal Shelter undertook the task of rehoming him.

Mr. Meows understandably had a rough go when he arrived at the Shelter. Our Animal Care Attendants spent a good deal of time with him to try to help him adjust to his temporary home at the Shelter and feel less scared about his surroundings. Still, going from king of the house in his former loving home to adjusting to Shelter life was not easy for this handsome fellow. Mr. Meows started to settle and was declared fit for adoption after his health check at the RAPS Animal Hospital.

Shelter staff knew it would take a special person to see the light in Mr. Meows through his shy and slightly fearful demeanor. Fortunately, the perfect person for Mr. Meows submitted an adoption application and came in for two meet-and-greets with this special boy and also spoke at length with our Shelter Manager to really make sure he could offer Mr. Meows the special home he so deserved.

His new dad, David, sent the following update: "Thought I'd let you know Mr. Meows has adapted well to his new home! He is pleased with the fresh carpet and tolerant of the messy



Photo courtesy RAPS

After his elderly owner moved into a care facility, Mr. Meows found a new home with help from RAPS.

bed. While he's affectionate, a large part of Mr. Meows' charm is his independence."

Mr. Meows is just one of so many animals who require rehoming because their aging family moves into a care facility.

In recent years, RAPS has put in place systems that encourage people to plan ahead for their pets in the event of a change of housing situation or the owner's passing. We rehome pets or, if a cat is unlikely to find a forever home, we integrate them into the RAPS Cat Sanctuary,

our "Kitty Club Med" in East Richmond. We also partner with lawyer Rebeka Breder, a Canadian leader in animal law, to educate estate planners and the general public about planning ahead for the well-being of pets in the process of estate preparations.

If you, or someone you know, needs guidance in planning for a pet in the event of a significant life change, contact us at admin@rapsbc.com.

Pat Johnson is communications manager of the Regional Animal Protection Society.

MY NAME IS BUFFALO

Buffalo is a little Rex bunny with the softest fur you will ever feel. She is a very friendly girl with a great personality and is very good and comfortable around people. However, she is still learning to be litter box trained. She can get messy, but her sweet personality makes up for it. If you have the patience for a little extra cleaning, she is the perfect girl for you.

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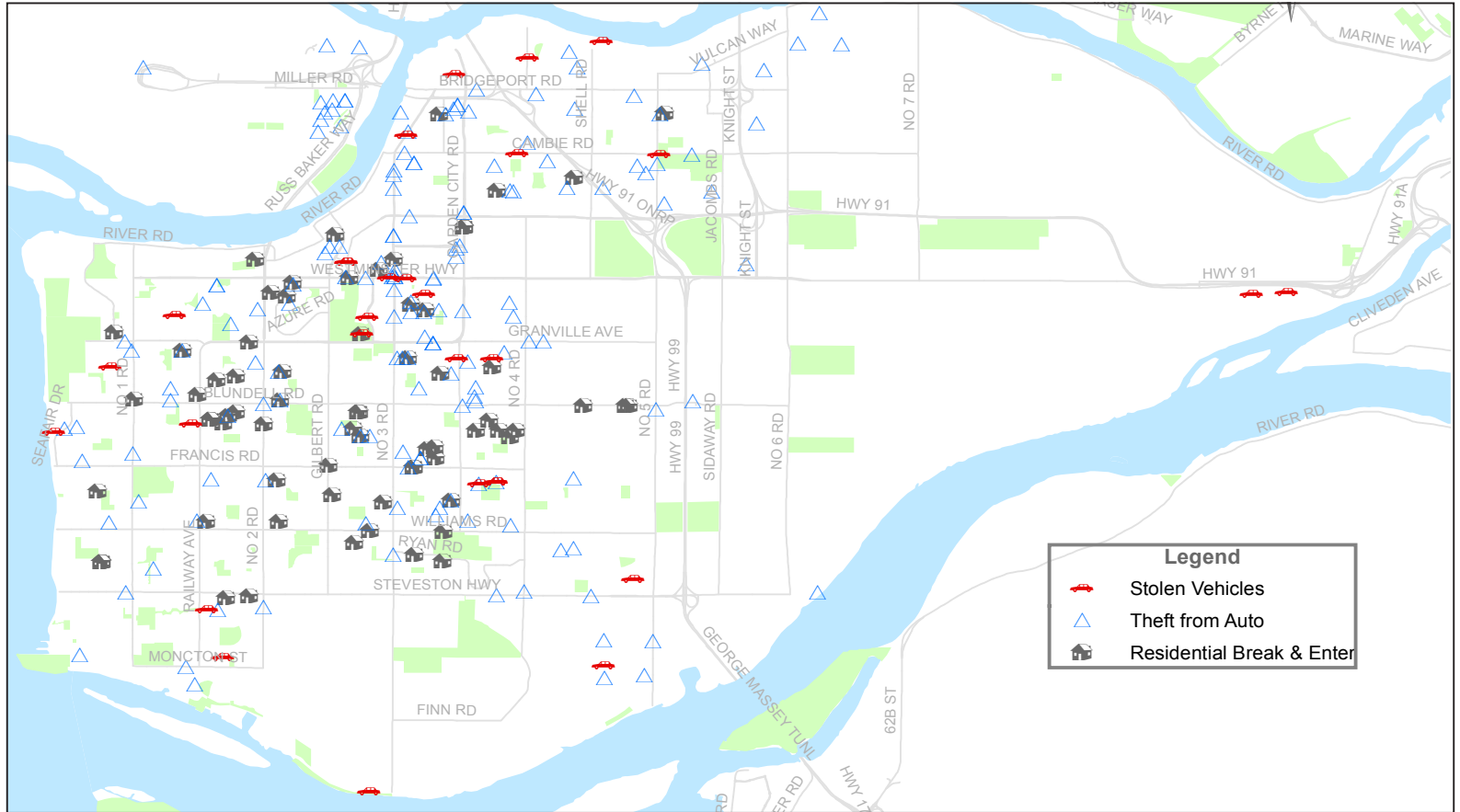
The RAPS Animal Hospital and Animal Ambulance are supported by Applewood Nissan





RCMP

Crime Map Oct 1 - 31, 2020



Six arrested in Richmond after drug labs busted

Six people were arrested in Richmond in connection to clandestine drug labs found by police last month.

Richmond RCMP executed multiple search warrants on Oct. 28 after an investigation of the group responsible for the alleged laboratories that began in March.

"Over the last eight months, Richmond RCMP organized crime unit, along with the assistance of multiple Richmond RCMP investigative units, have been called upon to spend countless hours to bring the project to this point," said Cst. Kenneth Lau. "As a result of their meticulous work, they uncovered three locations with suspected drug manufacturing labs, all within the city of Richmond."

The search warrants were executed with assistance from the federal RCMP clandestine lab enforcement and response team, with Richmond Fire-Rescue's HAZMAT team, chemists from Health Canada, and paramedics with BC Emergency Health Services as other partnering agencies on hand to ensure the safe dismantling of the operations. The size of the discovered operations resulted in the properties being held for five days while the labs were being dismantled.

"These types of searches need to be carefully planned and coordinated due to the potentially

hazardous items typically found at these locations to ensure public and police safety is not jeopardized," said Insp. Michael Cohee, officer-in-charge of investigative services. "This group was a priority of the Richmond RCMP and the dismantling of these labs will result in a significant disruption of organized crime in the city of Richmond."

The searches at the three properties yielded significant amounts of illicit street drugs, pill presses, and firearms. Items seized include suspected methamphetamine, suspected fentanyl, cannabis, three pill presses and six firearms. Investigators also recovered cash and high-end items suspected to be proceeds of crime. The complex investigation remains ongoing and charges are pending.

Richmond RCMP are committed to locating and dismantling any potential clandestine labs operating within our city. The public's assistance is critical in helping identify a potential location for such operations. Some signs to watch for are:

- the occupants appear secretive, unfriendly, and are either always home or never home
- the occupants bring unusual items into the residences such as buckets of chemicals, pill presses, laboratory glassware or an unusual amount of the same cookware (pots)
- the premises have been outfitted with expen-



Photo courtesy Richmond RCMP

Six people were arrested and a considerable amount of street drugs seized after three drug labs were found in Richmond last month.

sive security measures or the occupants are paranoid about who has seen them

- there are strong smells of chemical odours such as the sharp smell of solvents and acids
- the garbage is unusual; such as pots or chemical containers with labels removed

Anyone with further information about this investigation or other criminal activity is asked to contact the Richmond RCMP at 604-278-1212, or if you wish to remain anonymous, Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-8477 or at www.solvecrime.ca.



Photos submitted

Henry Yao is passionate about providing youth with the opportunities to succeed, something he'll continue to champion in his new role as MLA for Richmond South Centre.

Henry Yao: Richmond South Centre

By **DON FENNELL**
@rmdsentinel

A rude awakening in the early 2000s dramatically altered Henry Yao's life path.

Newly-elected MLA for Richmond South Centre, Yao was working in the private sector in 2004 but the 60-hour weeks were taking their toll.



Soon, the goal of making money was replaced by a stark reality when he was diagnosed with two different types of lymphoma. But fortunately, with the continuous support of family and friends, the cancer went into remission five years later.

"I'm thankful that I had a huge wake-up call and a reminder that our time on earth is limited," he says. "I realized if my goal was to spend the rest of my life making money then it was a really wasted opportunity given to me. Ever since, I wanted to volunteer and see what is out there."

The first step drew him to a career working with youth—and ultimately to seek a seat in the political arena as a means of helping even more people.

"My family taught me a deep sense of duty," explains Yao, a belief that has been further advanced by his growing interest in history.

Arriving in Richmond from his native Taiwan at the age of 10, Yao—fluent in Mandarin but still learning English at the time—felt somewhat withdrawn. But two classes during his final high school years at McNair Secondary would have a profoundly positive impact on his outlook going forward.

"My history teacher in Grade 12 opened up my interest in history. Before then I hated it, memorizing dates or connecting a series of events," Yao explains. "But his teaching methods were differ-

ent than others I'd experienced. He taught about relationships and human struggles through times and circumstances, and to see beyond."

A second class—theatre—also helped Yao emerge from his shell, and to develop a growing appreciation for individuality within the context of a group. Though he was more of a "backstage person," he likens the experience to being part of a family.

Inspired to pursue youth work, where he could contribute positively to a new generation, Yao worked at the Richmond Youth Services Agency and the Richmond City Centre Community Centre. There, he encouraged young adults to develop skills in career building, leadership development, and community engagement.

In 2014, a decade after he was diagnosed with cancer, Yao ran for city council in a bid to step up his efforts to pave a brighter future for the new generations. While he didn't win a seat in the civic election, it did further open his eyes to society's complexities. And it further shaped the view he takes with the Legislative Assembly in Victoria.

"Governance is all about supporting people and making their lives better," he says, believing strongly in the importance of discussion. "I think it's important for us to realize no one has 100 per

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HENRY YAO

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cent of the answers for everything, so we must have civilized and respectful dialogue (among all party members). We have to share and debate to figure out what is best for BC."

Yao continues to be a strong advocate for young people, and is continually amazed by their talents and ability. He says it's important they are provided with every opportunity to succeed.

"Youth have often been looked down upon by society. But my goal has always been not to want to change them into something we think society wants them to be, but for them to grow into who they are meant to be," he says. "We don't give youth enough opportunity to truly be who they are, and to experiment with different ideas without fear of making mistakes. Sometimes as adults we have to say no, but otherwise we need to try our best to trust youth and usually they respond very well."

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, Yao says it is also important to recognize and appreciate the contributions made by our elders and seniors. He says the NDP has made it a priority to improve conditions for long-term care.

"COVID has made things a lot more difficult,



and an ongoing challenge for sure, but we need to ensure our seniors get to retire with dignity and in comfort," he says.

Further, Yao calls those working in the non-profit service sector "heroes."

"They are probably taking the most punishment for our society, while at the same time their financial resources are draining due to a lack of fundraising opportunities."

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Teresa Wat: Richmond North Centre

By DON FENNELL
@rmdsentinel

When Teresa Wat left her native Hong Kong in 1989 to study journalism at the University of Hawaii, she was surprised to discover how much political talk was taboo.

At least in general discussion.

"You don't have democracy without the right to vote, and we should have politics as a (school) subject so the younger generation can see politics as more than if they were studying history," says Wat, recently re-elected to her third consecutive term as MLA for Richmond North Centre. "My daughter (who grew up and was educated in Richmond) said they hardly talked about politics when she was in school."

Having hosted many coffee dates with her constituents through the years, she says sadly relatively few people drop by. Most are repeat visitors or have a particular interest in politics.

A self-described bookworm growing up, Wat enthusiastically adopted her father's interest in current affairs.

"I remember he subscribed to the daily Chinese language paper throughout the years, and he was always waiting for them on our doorstep," she says. "It's why I picked journalism as a major, so when I came to BC, after a brief secretarial job and being news editor for a multi-cultural station (eventually becoming its CEO), I started becoming interested in local politics."

In 1996 she took a job with the province—then as now governed by the NDP—in communications, directly responsible for reaching out to the multi-cultural community. She stayed in the job for almost six years before being laid off—ironically while Premier Gordon Campbell's Liberals, a party she would ultimately wind up joining, were governing the province.

After a return to journalism, and overseeing the first-ever multi-language news programming on Channel M, she decided to enter the political arena in 2013. She was elected to represent the residents of what was then known as Richmond Centre (and since split into two ridings), succeeding Liberal incumbent Rob Howard who retired. Premier Christy Clark appointed Wat to the portfolio of Minister of International Trade, Responsible for the Asia



Photos submitted

Family encouraged Teresa Wat to run for political office. She remains grateful for their support and encouragement, and that of her constituents who have given her a third straight mandate as MLA for Richmond North Centre.

Pacific Strategy and Multiculturalism.

Wat won re-election in 2017 in the new Richmond North Centre riding with 52 per cent of the votes, and the just-completed 2020 election a comparable 51 per cent of votes.

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TERESA WAT

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It was her late husband Stephen, who passed away in 2011, that prompted Wat to go into politics. A fellow journalism student in Hong Kong he always reminded her of being grateful to be able to immigrate to Canada and give back to the community.

"He and I were totally different," she says. "My

mother used to say she didn't have the opportunity to pursue a secondary education and always regretted not having her own career. She always instilled in me as a girl the need to be fully independent, so I could look after myself. My husband was always interested in volunteer work. When he was struck by cancer in 2003 he was given a year to live, but thank God that was expanded to seven years."

Wat strives to connect with all her constituents, and to serve as a bridge for newcomers.

She has also earned a reputation for being straightforward. What you see is what you get,

a Liberal colleague once said of her. She doesn't feel it is fair to give people hope or make promises and then not deliver.

"If you can't let (constituents) know the possibilities in front of them don't try to fool them that something can be done," she says. "Sometimes it can upset them, but it's not right otherwise."

Wat says getting into politics comes with sacrifices, but it's a labour of love.

"I'm grateful and honoured that the constituents have entrusted me for a third term in a row, and this is an honour I won't take lightly."

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