

# The art of sign language

## The Internet age has not ended the pursuit of name recognition

BY TESSA HOLLOWAY, NORTH SHORE NEWS APRIL 13, 2011



Candidates from the top three federal parties post their election signs near Pemberton Heights in North Vancouver.

**Photograph by:** Cindy Goodman, NEWS photo

The Internet may be revolutionizing how politics is done, but don't expect those pesky election signs popping up all over the North Shore to disappear any time soon.

Why they're important and how best to use them, however, is up for debate.

For North Vancouver Conservative Andrew Saxton's campaign, it was important to jump out of the gate and get the signs out early

"It helps to show that we're organized, we're ready and we have a real presence here in North Vancouver," he said.

That's not important, said Greg Wilson, campaign manager for Liberal challenger Taleeb Noormohamed, who said the most important thing is that signs go on people's lawns, not public property, and that they stand out on election day.

"I think signs fade into the woodwork," he said. "You'll see we'll do something different with our signs to

make sure they don't fade into the landscape too much as time goes on."

Greg Lyle, the owner of Innovative Research who's also worked on campaigns for the B.C. Liberals and former Progressive Conservatives, said signs can do two things that nothing else can: increase name recognition and publicly display who's voting for who.

"A lot of people will skip to the sports section of the newspaper and skip over a Facebook post if it's political, but you can't miss a sign if you're stopped at a stop light," said Lyle, who is polling for Maclean's magazine this year. "The other thing a sign does is show local momentum, particularly if they're on private property rather than public property."

All the campaign representatives say they're aiming for signs on lawns much more than on public property, though Saxon's campaign has covered the boulevards much more than Noormohamed's, who feels those signs don't help.

"Anybody can win a war by putting signs on public property," countered Noormohamed. "Signs on people's lawns are far more important."

Overall, the Liberals and Tories would not comment on how much they're spending, but all said spending is staying fairly flat from previous years.

In many ways, the signs work with social media, said David Bromley, campaign manager for John Weston, the West Vancouver-Sunshine Coast-Sea to Sky Conservative candidate. "It is a portal for social media. It gives people a starting point to get into a website and then go into Facebook or Twitter from there," he said.

Mark Masongsong, campaign manager for Liberal candidate Dan Veniez, said the signs help in getting his name out.

"The main thing is visibility, you want to make sure the public recognizes the names so they can visit the website and they can learn about the candidate," he said.

Every campaign representative said signs are limited because they're one-way communication only, rather than the two-way discussions that can take place online or at the doorstep.

Less than a week into the election, about a dozen West Vancouver signs have already been pulled by municipal staff for violating district bylaws.

Most were removed for safety reasons, said Jessica Delaney, spokeswoman for West Vancouver.

"Any signage that's an issue of public safety -- blocking sight lines at intersections or anything like that - we remove them," she said, but added that so far there have been no public complaints.

Both Liberal and Conservative representatives admit they have lost a few -- just part of the business, they said.

Similar bylaws exist in the two North Vancouver municipalities limiting where election signs can be placed.

In the district, for instance, signs aren't allowed on district property, utility poles, near Highway 1 or anywhere that obstructs people's movement.

Any complaints about election sign placement should be directed to the local municipality.

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