

# 10 reasons for a No vote in transit referendum

• 12 Mar 2015 • The Vancouver Sun • Barbara Yaffe byaffe@vancouversun.com

## Balloting begins next week on whether to support a new Metro Vancouver transportation tax, making this an ideal time to consider 10 good reasons to vote No

1 Taxation needs limits. A consensus exists that we are sufficiently taxed. Moreover, B.C. has a couple of levies unique to this province, such as a carbon tax and Medical Services Premiums. And Vancouverites have higher living costs than other Canadians. If the mayors' council listens closely, it will hear a cry of "Uncle."

6 The cart is being put before the horse, with the holding of a \$5-million referendum before taxpayers know whether B.C. and Ottawa are kicking in their anticipated share of required revenues. If they refuse, the referendum will have been for naught.

2 Many in the region, even if they were to hand over extra tax money, would not choose to give it to the mayors, presiding over municipalities that have been criticized of overspending, or to TransLink, castigated for its cavalier expenditures.



7 Higher PST will make purchases more costly. A 12 per cent GST/PST already inhibits some shoppers, not a good thing for retailers. Indeed, a small business survey released earlier this month showed 69 per cent believe it would be bad for business. Also, retailers who were inconvenienced when the HST was axed in 2012 would again be inconvenienced. Plus, businesses — to cover 45 per cent of the \$250 million to be raised — would pass that cost to consumers, boosting prices of everything further. And remember, this tax would hike new home prices, not a good thing in Vancouver.

3 Budgeting aside, TransLink does not have a terrific record when it comes to providing service, particularly where bus transport is concerned. Signage reading “Sorry, Not In Service” — especially during downpours — comes to mind. Throwing former CEO Ian Jarvis (pictured) under the bus, in a desperate gesture weeks before the balloting, hardly inspired confidence. 8 Mayors in Montreal and Toronto — now planning the same sort of transportation infrastructure spending — are not proposing to raise taxes to do so. Here’s a recent quote from Toronto Mayor John Tory, asked whether his city should raise taxes for transportation infrastructure: “I start from this premise: Are people paying enough taxes? In many cases, you could argue, they can’t afford to pay any more. We should be looking at total amounts paid to all three levels of government and how that is being allocated.” Well said.

4 A Yes vote could set a dangerous precedent for more revenue-raising-by-plebiscite in future. Politicians should govern, standing or falling on their decisions. They should not continually canvass citizens on tax increases in order to pre-empt political blowback.

9 It is infuriating to some Vancouverites that the mayors did not include in their budgeting plans even a small amount of the needed revenue from their own current spending. Nor did they deign to give voters a realistic alternative to the tax that they could vote for. Plan B was depicted as simple catastrophe. Thus taxpayers, 99 per cent of whom recognize new transportation resources are needed, lack viable options to choose from.

5 Questions remain unanswered about how revenues and spending associated with the mayors’ plan would be overseen, regardless of the appointment of Jim Pattison (pictured). For example, if annual tax revenues exceed the \$250 million to be raised, would surplus funds be returned to taxpayers? Importantly, would the new tax remain once road pricing and more tolls are introduced?

10 The campaign has not been fought fairly. Normally, when such a referendum is held, the two competing sides receive the same amount of funding to lobby. This time, the Yes side had the advantage of plentiful municipal public resources, and spent some \$6 million. The No side got nothing in that regard, spending \$40,000. I could go on, but have run out of space. Vote No, with your head held high.

## 10 Comment(s)

12 March 2015

07:07

To put it bluntly--the B.C. Liberal government is responsible for the transit referendum in the first place. We can guess how much money our elected representatives will put into a transit system when they crow about "balancing the budget"--note the article about funds from the public schools that forces them to cut lunch programs for poor kids.

07:39 The BC government may have told Metro to hold a referendum but that was in response to Translink and Metro's attempts to further themselves from any increase in taxes caused by their incompetence.

In the past Translink tried to get the Provincial government to raise taxes or fees and then give the money to Translink. They thought this would distance themselves from the unpleasantness of being responsible for raising taxes. Instead of raising the taxes in the obvious place, property tax, Metro and Translink are trying to down load the raise in taxes on the province. If this tax passes they can claim the PST is a provincial tax and it is therefore the province that is charging you and I more. In a few years everyone will forget where the .5% came from and just blame the province. Translink will claim that they are wonderful and look at all the services they provide.

12 March 2015

07:58

In summary, the public was given a "yes or no" question to answer a multifaceted proposition. I think that "none of the above" would have been the overwhelming winner on the referendum if it had been offered. It's time to back to the drawing board. I guess a no vote will accomplish that, but a well defined set of options would have provided better direction to the proponents.

12 March 2015

08:18

Fix the problem first. The brain-trust that is running the show now are the same Keystone Kops that will run it tomorrow.

Then, simply go ahead with a good plan from existing revenues.

There is plenty enough fat to cut to get down to the meat.

12 March 2015

08:35

For a starter Transit Police, even at their \$100,000 salary, could become a revenue source. Instead of walking around blindly and giving warnings to fare evaders, they could actually do their job and ticket them. They only need to write about 3 fare evasion tickets a day at \$173 to cover their exorbitant salary.

When I rode the train daily I rarely saw transit cops checking fares. But when they did they easily found fare evaders. Their standard procedure was to escort them off the train and explain to them how to use the fare machines or that there was more than one zone in the system. They would then let them go on their way with a fresh bought ticked and a warning not to do it again.

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12 March 2015

09:06

Fare evaders can simply be handled by the requirement to use your ticket to get access and egress from the station (ever been on the tube in London?)

Transit police are necessary, but once fare evaders are dealt with maybe not so many are needed.

There are other changes to the management that should create an efficient, effective operation for transit and if that is done, the funding Translink receives would probably be enough to run an efficient transportation system for the lower mainland now and in the future.

Pouring more money into an organization that has a proven track record of inefficiency is proof of the definition of stupidity - doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results.

I don't like the campaign of the Yes side, with scare tactics. Instead, earn the respect of taxpayers and create an effective transportation system with the funding you have. Then propose options to effect change and let those you serve decide if you are worthy of their trust.

12 March 2015

09:10

The plan is a bad one. Start with dropping Moonshine's vanity project, the subway to nowhere.

12 March 2015

09:20

Ms. Yaffe is right about this, a rare occurrence for her. I propose a toast. Let's not allow this anomaly to pass unnoticed.

12 March 2015

10:23

Well done, lets make these municipalities start cutting their excessive wages and perks and start inpputting their taxes into translink. What % is going to the tunnel to nowhere???

12 March 2015

12:00

WELL SAID MS. YAFFE !! And you leave your credibility intact!!

Some journalists have either been told to support YES or are not thinking well! If this is how they really think after all of the TransLink blunders then one must, in the future, read them with a grain of salt!

But I also respect everyone's right to their opinion!!