

[Previous Story](#)

[Next Story](#)

Article rank | 18 Mar 2015 | The Vancouver Sun | Pete McMartin pmcmartin@vancouversun.com

# Canvassing for Yes side — from Toronto? 10

## More bad optics: Yes side hires Toronto call centre using people who clearly know nothing about Metro

John Reed, a member of the Simon Fraser University board of governors, now retired, emailed me Friday to share with me a phone call he'd received that day.



CHRIS YOUNG/THE CANADIAN PRESS FILES

**In another example of the Yes side's incredibly bad PR moves, they used taxpayer money to hire a Toronto call centre to phone people here urging them to vote yes, writes columnist Pete McMartin.**

---

The phone call was from a canvasser asking him to vote Yes in the upcoming transit plebiscite. Wrote Reed: "She opened by saying: 'Hi, I'm phoning of behalf of (Surrey mayor) Linda Hepner in support of the transit referendum.' She began to read from what I took to be a script and I interrupted to state that I was voting Yes on the referendum and knew what she was talking about. She was pleasant, even chirpy, and continued to read.

"When she stated the campaign for the Yes vote was being headed by Gerry Pattison, I interrupted once more to correct her. I'm also certain that she didn't know that Linda Hepner was mayor of Surrey.

"She then began to explain the benefits of voting Yes, yet seemed unclear about the realities of transit in the Lower Mainland, so I asked 'Where are you phoning from?' and she replied 'Ontario.' I asked where in Ontario? And she replied 'Toronto.' I asked how she might feel if I called her from White Rock to ask her to support a referendum in Ontario and she said that the canvassing was done from Ontario so as to be 'neutral.'

"I said asking me to vote Yes on a referendum was hardly neutral, which she didn't seem to grasp. I also asked if she was familiar with the public transit and highway system in B.C. and she said 'no' and that she had never been to B.C.

"At that point, I assured her that my remarks were not intended as an attack on her but simply because of my incredulity of using B.C. taxpayers' money to support a B.C. referendum. She couldn't confirm her firm had been hired with taxpayer monies, but since she was calling on behalf of the mayor of Surrey, I concluded that this was the case. We then hung up."

For Reed, that the call had originated in Ontario underscored what he called "the incredible ineptitude" of the Yes campaign and the "blindness" of elected officials for using B.C. tax dollars to hire an Ontario firm.

Remember, this was a man who didn't need to be persuaded to vote Yes. That the call hadn't persuaded him to vote No was, frankly, amazing.

"I'm voting Yes on the referendum," Reed wrote, "because not acting to save any part of the planet turns humankind into an agent of extinction, and small efforts such as the transit referendum at least begin to address our common dilemma. I fear, as many do, that No will prevail, in large part because many drivers don't feel that the referendum will ease their commute and have little use for public transit."

To verify Reed's experience, I emailed Port Coquitlam Mayor Greg Moore, who's heading up the public relations for the Yes campaign. Was the Yes side using a canvassing company out of Toronto?

Moore didn't seem to know if that were the case, and wrote that he would look into it.

On Sunday, Moore messaged back: "As you are aware in any type of campaign individual contact is important. In this campaign, it might even be more important, as we are asking people to vote on the Mayor's Plan, which is a new document with many new services. We have used many techniques (sic) to help educate the public, including telephone town halls and direct calling.

"It is my understanding that there is not enough call centre capacity in the Metro Vancouver area, so our suppliers subcontract some of the calls to call centres in other parts of the country. Every municipal/provincial/federal campaign of any scope and size has run into the same issue and all have handled it the same way when running campaigns in B.C. So this is not unusual."

Well, OK. But there are campaigns and there are campaigns. I'm not sure what municipal, provincial and federal campaigns Moore was referring to other than election campaigns, and those are funded largely by private donations, not tax dollars.



As someone who supports the mayors' transit plan, I understand the importance of getting the word out. But when your opponents are swaying public opinion against you by accusing you of wasting tax dollars on your campaign and arguing the organization you were representing consists of irresponsible spendthrifts, didn't anyone on the Yes side consider the optics of taking those tax dollars out of province? Didn't anyone think that maybe this was a bad call?

This article was shared by a user of PressReader - an online source of publications from around the world. PressReader contains copyrighted material, trademarks and other proprietary information. Receipt of this article should not be interpreted as grant of any licenses express or implied, to the intellectual property of PressReader or publishers of publications presented. PressReader - Connecting People Through News PressReader, 200-13111 Vanier Place, Richmond BC V6V 2J1, Canada Phone: +1 604 278 4604 © 2003-2014 NewspaperDirect Inc. dba PressReader. All rights reserved. Terms of Use: [http://www.pressdisplay.com/pressdisplay/showlink.aspx?pageid=ins\\_terms](http://www.pressdisplay.com/pressdisplay/showlink.aspx?pageid=ins_terms) Privacy Policy: [http://www.pressdisplay.com/pressdisplay/showlink.aspx?pageid=ins\\_privacy](http://www.pressdisplay.com/pressdisplay/showlink.aspx?pageid=ins_privacy)

[Previous Story](#)

[Next Story](#)