

Tuesday, March 17: Inaction is unacceptable

If we want better transit, we must pay - so I'm voting
Yes

MARCH 16, 2015



Commuters ride the SkyTrain from Granville Station in Vancouver on March 12, 2015. The upcoming transit referendum is nearing the vote day.

Photograph by: Mark van Manen, PNG

I hear, "I support transit but the money should come from somewhere else."

Well, where exactly? Show me the math and the impacts. Money for transit has to come from the pockets of you and me. This vote is simply about which pocket we want them to pick.

I hear, "They are wasting money. If they get more efficient that will pay for it."

Yes, they could always be more efficient. But there is no billion dollars waiting to be saved.

I hear, "I don't trust TransLink."

It's not like we'd be giving TransLink a billion dollars tomorrow. The vote is to start collecting money. Even an improved TransLink is going to need it. But if you want to do nothing until TransLink is fixed — how long would it take before we have a new plan? I wouldn't hold my breath.

The provincial government decided the money had to come from those who live here. The mayors worked with experts and they decided the sales tax approach was the most workable. I can live with that. We can't afford the cost of delay. I'm voting Yes.

TOM HANDLEY

North Vancouver

Whether Yes or No, tax debate continues

Re: 10 Reasons to vote No, Column, March 12

I was going to vote No, but Barbara Yaffe's column solidified my argument for doing so.

I agree, we are taxed to the hilt and it is both unfair and disingenuous to ask us to pay more. There is a limit and I believe taxpayers have reached it.

Asking us to pay another 0.5 per cent sales tax without telling us when they will lift it is not acceptable. Taxes are very seldom decreased, so we will be stuck with it.

This plebiscite has stepped into murky waters. It will show politicians that taxpayers have little appetite for any new tax increase. What next? Rioting in the streets?

ARMIDA SPADA

Vancouver

What we should ask ourselves before casting our vote is not if we pay sufficient taxes, but rather how does what we are asked to pay compare with the benefit we may receive.

I am willing to give \$0.87 a day, even to TransLink, if for that money I may spend less time waiting for the bus or sitting in gridlock. And if TransLink fails to deliver its promise of better public transit we, the region's residents, will have a very powerful argument to reclaim its control from the provincial government.

Let's not forget that if we vote No we will give the provincial government a great argument to wash its hands and let the region choke in gridlock.

Please, let's vote Yes as a first step, and stay vigilant to make sure that TransLink does its job!

ADAM POLICZER

Vancouver

Jordan Bateman of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation is saying we should vote No to save \$125 per year. He's missing the point.

We spend a little over \$2,000 a year per person — that's every man, woman and child — on traffic-accident-related health-care costs (and more on fixing property damage), which would be much lower if more people could take transit.

We spend \$10,000 a year per car, according to the Canadian Automobile Association — which we could avoid if we needed only one car instead of two, or could even do without one. It's ironic, but voting No is actually a vote for more wasteful spending.

So why is Bateman pushing the No vote? He's interested in denigrating government, not saving us money. This is, after all, the guy who criticized TransLink in 2012 for resisting the province's call for fare gates and who is now criticizing them for putting them in.

He'll say anything to cut government — no matter the cost. I don't trust him to have my best interests at heart. I'll be voting Yes next week — Yes to a smart, cost-efficient plan.

PETER WHITELOW

Vancouver

Details on transit tax are sorely lacking

Re: Voters deserve clarity on No vote, Editorial, March 12

After much thought, I have decided to not to vote in the transit plebiscite. Our elected officials with their highly trained staff should make this call.

Of course we must prepare for the future by improving infrastructure and I am happy to pay my share. However, how do I know if the best way to fund public transit is with a 0.5 percentage point increase in the provincial sales tax for an indefinite period for a portion of the province? Sounds kind of nutty to me, not to mention regressive and a burden on local business. Also, I am not in a position to decide whether TransLink is up to the task — that is the job of the Ministry of Transportation.

We are wasting millions of dollars to hold a plebiscite. I hope a low voter turnout will discourage the provincial government from doing it again.

KATHY LEAVENS

Vancouver

Is Victoria listening to these polls?

Re: No side has a clear majority, March 9

What a drastic shift in public opinion. In less than three months, fortunes of the Yes side have reversed. In view of the poor image of TransLink, these numbers (No: 55 per cent, Yes: 33 per cent) are unlikely to change. Let's hope the doomsday scenario predicted by the Yes side doesn't come to pass.

Unless there is a commitment by Victoria to drastically change the governance model of TransLink, there seems to be very little chance of any improvements in our transportation system and infrastructure. British Columbians deserve better.

BALWANT SANGHERA

Richmond

© Copyright (c) The Vancouver Sun