

# Voting results to roll in weekly

From page 1

unelected board and costly waste, and argued that there's no guarantee, even with a successful Yes vote, that the senior levels of government will show up with their share of the funding.

On Tuesday, after introducing the province's 10-year transportation plan, Transportation and Infrastructure Minister Todd Stone said the province would commit to providing its third — but only if the plebiscite passes. The federal government hasn't made any commitments related to the remaining third.

Stone also had a message for those hoping the plebiscite would be the

catalyst that finally pushes the province to change TransLink's governance model — one of the sore points for people on both sides of the debate. Stone called that a "red herring" and "distraction" from the campaign and said he has no plans to alter the governance model, regardless of the vote's outcome.

Recent polls have put the No vote ahead in the campaign by a ratio of about two to one.

Elections B.C. will accept returned ballots up until May 29 and deliver weekly updates on the voting results starting on April 1. The final count is not expected until the summer and will be delivered in the Legislative Assembly.



TransLink doubts are derailing the transportation funding debate. PHOTO MIKE WAKEFIELD

## Key dates

**March 16** — Voting packages mailed out to registered voters.

**March 27** — All voters registered prior to March 5 should have received their packages.

**April 13** — Plebiscite service offices open.

**May 15 (midnight)** — Deadline for registration.

**May 26** — Ensure all mailed-in ballots are posted so as to arrive by 8 p.m. on May 29.

**May 29 (8 p.m.)** — Deadline for receipts of ballots and closures of plebiscite service offices.

## Yes side

**BRENT RICHTER**  
brichter@nsnews.com

**Forget executive salaries. Forget fare gates. Forget poodles. None of those things are on the ballot.**

The only question that's being asked of Lower Mainland voters in the TransLink funding plebiscite is whether they approve funding an investment that will make it easier to get around, fuel economy and increase quality of life for Lower Mainland residents. That's the message from two of the region's most respected experts on city planning.

The impact of a growing bus fleet, light rail in Surrey, a Vancouver subway line, another SeaBus and more bike lanes and road improvements would be "transformative and inspirational," in the words of Brent Toderian, Vancouver's former chief city planner and a consultant sought around the world.

"What this transit investment would mean is a more successful, a healthier, a more sustainable, a more affordable and a more socially equitable region," Toderian said. "That's the power of the ripple effect of better movement."

More than 100 groups representing business interests, labour, the environment, tourism, seniors, students, cycling and poverty reduction have recognized that and signed on to support the yes vote, added Gordon Price, director of Simon Fraser University's city program.

"We're really good at building transit-oriented communities and getting the benefits of them. That's the reason we continue to rate so highly as a livable city," Price said. "We can do more of

that. We can give people more choices. The system can be better. It can serve more people and it can serve them with higher frequency."

The thrust of the No campaign has been from the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, a group whose raison d'être is limited to lowering taxes, not the movement of goods and people around the Lower Mainland, Price noted.

And the cost of what's being proposed is far less than what it would cost to try to solve the region's transportation woes by building more roads and bridges — probably about five times less, Price said.

"It's such a great deal for 35 cents," he said with a laugh. "Not only do you get a nice package of transportation improvements, but you get to shape the region for yourself and your kids and the next generation in a way that actually improves the quality of the economy, the environment, livability no matter what mode of transportation you take."

And Price warned the region is going to continue to grow, whether voters approve the half per cent sales tax increase or not.

"I think there's an illusion here that there's going to be a maintenance of the status quo and we'll live with what we've got. Not with another million people, we won't," Price said. "It's very straightforward. Here is the package. Here is the money and the mechanism. If you vote no, what then? Well, nothing happens. No buses are ordered. No planning proceeds. The growth doesn't stop but decisions have to be made. . . . We'll be living with consequences that no one is saying should be our future — more congestion."

## No side

**JANE SEYD**  
jseyd@nsnews.com

**Ever since the Mayors' Council announced plans to go ahead with a vote to fund new TransLink projects, West Vancouver Mayor Michael Smith has been an outspoken critic of the plan.**

Smith says he doesn't oppose a regional transit system, but is fundamentally opposed to giving any more money to TransLink, which he describes as unaccountable. "I've always been able to look citizens in the eye and say 'I've spent your money as if it was mine,'" he said. In the case of TransLink, Smith said he can't do that. "There's no control over it."

As the campaign over the vote has ramped up, events have "firmed up my opinion that voting No is essential," he said.

Smith says he's not a supporter of the Yes campaign, which he criticizes for spending \$6 million of public money to convince people of their cause. "I think they're overselling this thing," he said.

Most recently, Smith said he's been swamped with complaints from West Vancouver residents who've been receiving "robocalls" from the Yes campaign — including one from North Vancouver District Mayor Richard Walton. "Mayor Walton's call really incensed a lot of citizens," he said. "They don't like to be told what to do by people outside West Vancouver."

Smith said while "the community all agrees we need a good transit system for the region," TransLink needs to do a better job with the money it has. It also needs to be controlled by regional politicians who directly represent taxpayers, he says.

Smith doesn't believe that transit will simply be allowed to languish after a no vote. "If we vote No, the province will have to change the way TransLink is managed. The public will demand it," he said.

Smith also worries if a 0.5 increase in sales tax is approved, it will remain permanently in place and may even be increased. "Governments are like drug addicts. Once they get their hooks into a new source of revenue, they never let go," he said.

District of North Vancouver Coun. Roger Bassam is another local politician who is voting No.

Like Smith, Bassam said transit expansion is needed. But Bassam said he doesn't think it's right that TransLink has been tasked with building massive capital projects. "The province is responsible for that," he said.

But under the TransLink system, accountability for who is responsible for what has become "extremely obscured," he said.

Bassam said TransLink's obsession with building large capital projects like the Vancouver tunnel and the Surrey light rail system — which make up most of the current expansion plan — mean huge amounts of money have to go towards paying debt costs every year — even if those projects fail to bring in anticipated revenues.

"The truth is in the numbers," he said. "Down the road you could have a huge hole that you just funnel money into."

Bassam said there is also relatively little in the expanded transit plan for the North Shore. "How many times have we been promised a third SeaBus?" he said. "All we're getting is the transit we should already be getting."

## Here's how to make sure you can vote in the weeks ahead:

Only those who meet the following criteria can vote:

- Canadian citizens
- 18 years of age or older on or before May 29
- A B.C. resident for at least 6 months on or before

May 29

- Registered to vote in B.C.

People who were registered for the last municipal elections in 2014 and have not moved will have their voting packages mailed

automatically. People who are registering for the first time or have moved since the municipal elections in 2014 can register on or before midnight on Friday, May 15. Other registration methods include:

- Online: [elections.bc.ca](http://elections.bc.ca)
- By phone: 1-800-661-8683.
- At a plebiscite service office after Monday, April 13. Eight offices (locations to be determined) will open across the region between

Monday, April 13 and May 29 at 8 p.m. Services offered include:  
■ Registration (up to May 15) — Those without fixed addresses or ID can register by swearing a solemn oath. Some multilingual

- capabilities provided.
- Provision of ballots — new and replacements.
- Collection of ballots up to ballot deadline on May 29 at 8 p.m.

— Jenny Peng/  
Vancouver Courier