

Monday, March 23: Vote Yes for 'greater good'

Metro Vancouver has opportunity to lead country with long-term transit funding plan

MARCH 20, 2015



YES NO transit plebiscite

Photograph by: Mark Yuen, Vancouver Sun

During a recent visit to Metro Vancouver Region as 2nd Vice-president Federation of Canadian Municipalities, I read with great interest the many articles and websites on the plebiscite on transit funding. Coming from an area of our country that needs much more transit, I know firsthand the challenges of not making these investments.

After reading the articles in favour; those opposed and the "Mayors Plan," it became clear that Metro Vancouver has the opportunity to be leaders in the country by properly funding a long term transit plan.

I am confident the accountability measures that will be put in place will be a transparent system of funding that will benefit all residents.

Our country, from the railroad, to hydroelectric systems, to telephones and our highways has always been planned and paid for, with the "greater good" in mind. This is your moment to seize that opportunity and lay the ground work for the 22nd century.

I hope everyone will do their research, weigh the options and vote Yes for a better transit system for generations to come.

CLARK A. SOMERVILLE

Halton Hills/Halton Regional Councillor, Federation of Canadian Municipalities — 2nd Vice-president

Transit debate continues apace

I have been inundated with literature, emails and newspaper columns giving me a variety of reasons to support a Yes vote. The reasons are mostly compelling and the tax is relatively insignificant. I would like to cast my vote for the "greater good" of the community. So why am I still on the fence?

The government's "user-pay" philosophy only applies to some users. If you commute over the new Port Mann or Golden Ears Bridges, you pay more than \$1,500 annually in after-tax income to do so. However, if you commute over any of the other 19 bridges in the TransLink domain, all built out of general tax revenue, you pay nothing.

The government seemed proud to announce users of the Port Mann Bridge are paying the full cost of the bridge and road improvements leading to the bridge on both sides over the next 30 years. However, many people use these improved roads without using the bridge and they pay nothing. The entire scheme was poorly conceived and is full of inequities.

To put the annual cost of tolls in perspective, it is about equal to my car insurance. How happy would you be to have your car insurance double overnight while your neighbour's insurance remained the same?

When the toll went into effect there was no meaningful consultation, no referendum. It felt like extortion. I have no idea how low-income earners afford it.

Imagine the outcry if users of new schools or hospitals were required to pay a hefty surcharge, while older schools or hospitals were fully funded through general revenue?

Those who urge me to vote Yes seem oblivious that some of us are already heavily gouged by the bridge tolls. Enough is enough!

J. WILTSHIRE

Port Coquitlam

I am voting Yes for the students trying to get to their classes when the bus goes by full; I am voting for the worker trying to get out of Vancouver to work in Richmond when the bus goes by full; I am voting for the employees of all the services that I use: banks, fast food chains, grocery stores, shopping malls, hospitals, insurance offices, who all travel by public transit; I am voting for those without adequate public transit who have to drive unsafe cars they cannot afford.

I am a very infrequent user of TransLink, however, I am not just a taxpayer, I am a citizen with responsibilities, so I am voting Yes.

KATHLEEN GLYNN-MORRIS

West Vancouver

Hundreds of millions of dollars are required for the short Cambie to Arbutus subway. There will be little

to no benefit for our other major traffic congestion areas.

It is disingenuous of city council to ask us to spend hundreds of millions of dollars to reduce congestion, while encouraging developers to build more condominiums. The development of the Cambie Corridor will see thousands of new condominiums. One project by Omni at Cambie and Marine Drive will have 350 new condo units, and parking for many new cars. Multiply this by many more such buildings on the Corridor, and it is obvious there will be a lot more congestion in the near future.

This makes it easy for me to vote No, and I hope many Vancouverites will also see the failed logic of the plebiscite.

K. MORRISON

Vancouver

Where does the buck for transportation infrastructure stop? Yes, we need to invest in transportation infrastructure to support a healthy provincial economy. It has been my understanding that responsibility for its provision rests with the provincial government which has the taxing authority to pay for it.

But what a strange situation we now have in this province. The provincial government's answer to provide financing for transit is an ill-conceived plebiscite for a locally based sales tax increase. I thought I lived in the province of B.C., not the province of the Lower Mainland. Further, to encourage a Yes vote, the premier indicates that the only alternative for transit financing is an increase in local property taxes, which are not a provincial responsibility.

In the past, when faced with similar problems, WAC Bennett's government was able to get things done by accepting responsibility and doing the job it was elected to do. Why can't present day politicians follow that example.

My No vote is not against spending on needed facilities or indeed against TransLink. Rather, it is a signal for the provincial government to rethink its involvement and assume its responsibility.

GEORGE DUDDY

White Rock

As a Surrey resident, I will vote No to a tax increase. I already pay property tax, gas tax, parking tax, Hydro fees and tolls on the bridges I use.

TransLink has enough money to run a transportation service. They should not have to be financing bridges and road upgrades — that is the job of the Ministry of Transportation.

Why should Metro Vancouver pay extra sales tax for roads and bridges?

RITA SPEARMAN

Surrey