

Jodie Emery: Why I'm voting No in the transit referendum and you should too

by [Jodie Emery](#) on February 20th, 2015 at 10:53 AM

I will be voting No on the [TransLink referendum](#). I'm happy to support transit and transportation infrastructure with my tax dollars, and currently do so alongside everyone else in this province, but it's time to tell governments we simply cannot afford any more taxation.

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There are a number of reasons to vote No. Some people will go into the details of bus purchases and tunnels for trains, or describe outrageously dire consequences for our health and economy if we refuse to vote Yes, but I'm voting No to send the government a message: Stop punishing families and individuals in B.C.

We live in one of the most expensive places in the world and many of us struggle to afford rent, groceries, electricity, phone bills, and other basic essentials. Government taxation continues to climb through fare hikes at ICBC, B.C. Ferries, B.C. Hydro, and Revenue Services' MSP bills, with no end to the increases in sight.

At the same time, property taxes, food prices, and education costs keep creeping upwards, and inflation affects every purchase we make. Meanwhile, most taxpayers' incomes are rising slowly, if at all. A new tax that generates \$250 million each year is certain to be taken out of our local economy.

So I'm voting No to defend families and individuals in B.C. Every dollar the government would take with a new tax could otherwise be spent in our communities on food, education, dental work, eye care, sports equipment, recreation, music classes, clothing, and charities. If not taken by taxation, that money could support local artists, entertainment, and small businesses, or go into savings accounts for university and retirement.

A Yes vote on the TransLink tax means we will all have less money in our wallets to spend on our immediate and long-term health and well-being, and will make it even harder for many people to make ends meet. A new tax will punish us all financially with every purchase we make.

Many numbers have been discussed as the TransLink tax referendum approaches but everyone agrees that the tax will hurt poor families and low-income earners the most. At the same time, B.C.'s population continues to grow, more money is coming into the province, and other taxes

keep rising, so the government already has growing tax revenue. There should be no need to take even more money from taxpayers to fund basic infrastructure.

Like many others, I'm also wary of the transit tax proposal because TransLink has no fiscal responsibility or accountability. In addition, taxpayer-funded government projects are notorious for costing far more in the end than promised in the beginning. It's also frustrating to see the "Vote Yes" campaign use our tax dollars and tax-paid government employees to promote their message, while threatening voters with tax hikes in other areas of our lives if we choose to vote No.

Taxpayers are tired of being disrespected. The mismanagement and waste at TransLink—and every level of government—needs to be addressed before any new taxes are imposed, and current financial resources need to be re-prioritized and redirected. Other major cities and regions are capable of operating successful transit infrastructure at a better price for taxpayers, so we should be able to do the same here. Public services should be the highest quality possible, delivered in the most efficient manner at the most affordable rate, and with total transparency and accountability. TransLink fails taxpayers on all counts.

Those are the reasons I am voting No. We simply do not have any more money to spare, and this is an opportunity to tell government to stop hurting taxpayers.

[Jodie Emery](#) is a small business owner and political activist in Vancouver. This commentary was distributed by the No TransLink Tax campaign.