

# Province must talk cents on transit subsidy

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Dear Editor:

More than 20 mayors in the Lower Mainland are proposing to add a twocent levy to the price of a litre of gas to pay for public transport improvements, but the provincial government is dithering (The Fairer Tax, July 13, North Shore News).

I find it astonishing that the supposedly intelligent individuals who run our province are incapable of making sensible and logical judgements.

As you so rightly say in your editorial, we are facing gridlock in Vancouver, and there is a desperately pressing need for reliable peoplemoving public transport. To pay for this through endless increases in property tax is utterly ridiculous, and it should be obvious to anyone that it is the automobile that will have to pay.

If public transport is reliable and runs regularly, more and more people will use it, spending less on gas and effectively rendering the tax neutral.

One of the reasons for the relative absence of really fuel efficient cars is the low price of fuel; it is laughable to hear people talk about high gas prices while they continue to pollute at will and with gusto.

The two-cent tax is expected to raise some \$40 million, although we need \$35 million on the North Shore alone to pay for SeaBus and other routes.

So how about adding 10 cents per litre? This would provide some \$200 million and allow for a huge increase in services. It might even allow for fuel subsidies to those on low incomes.

It would also encourage the purchase of fuel efficient vehicles.

Gas used to be 70 cents a litre; now it is \$1.40. The price doesn't matter as much as a solid economy, and that will be boosted by a better public transport system. People can absorb gas price hikes, have always done so and will continue to do so, but they cannot absorb pollution into their lungs nor a steadily increasing level of traffic on the roads.

It is time for the mayors to get tough with the provincial government, and time for the latter to adopt a clear path with common sense and responsibility.

Tony Merkin

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