

Subject: [Fwd: Re: Mrs. Maureen Bragg's presentation to Council and the 2010 Bid.]

Date: Tue, 18 Feb 2003 17:28:13 -0800

From: Brian Platts <bplatts@shaw.ca>

To: Corrie Kost <kost@triumf.ca>

----- Original Message -----

Subject: Re: Mrs. Maureen Bragg's presentation to Council and the 2010 Bid.

Date: Wed, 19 Feb 2003 00:41:16 +0000 (GMT)

From: Elizabeth James <cagebc@yahoo.com>

To: Ernie Crist <ernie_crist@dnv.org>, m.bragg@shaw.ca

CC: Mayor and Council - DNV <council@dnv.org>, Directors Team <managecomm@dnv.org>, "FONVCA (E-mail)" <fonvca@fonvca.org>

Dear Clr. Crist:

Agree with you on all points except the last. Mrs. Bragg did make an excellent presentation and the 2010 Bid was allowed too much time - no matter whose motions were delayed.

That the Bid-talk was allowed to take up so much time on the Agenda - in my opinion - was a continuation of the ill-disguised strategy of trying to take the eyes of the people 'off the ball' - the ball being the manner in which past Councils have mismanaged District affairs, and the manner in which most details of that mismanagement continue to be kept from the taxpayers who must foot the bills. Fill the Agenda with awards ceremonies - even if some date back as far as October 2002 - and emotional support for our kids playing sports and people will forget what really ails them.

The Bid-talk was all the more frustrating because, (a) any details the Bid Committee wants us to know have already appeared extensively, at our considerable cost, in the Press and on radio/TV; and, (b) it cost us yet more of our own dollars to have Mr. Furlong tell us nothing new but a few comforting strokes about how fantastic the North Shore is, and about how our volunteers are champing at the bit. The rest was nothing more nor less than presentations from the usual vested interests. Clr. Nixon was the only one who tried to get at some of the nitty-gritty and even his questions were stick-handled off the table.

Let's take a look at some of the most important points that should come under the magnifying glass:

1. Residual Assets: Highway Infrastructure: Sea-to-Sky:

I lived in Squamish in 1963-65. Every time we drove into Vancouver we had a close call on the 2-lane, winding highway - mostly from other drivers but some from rock fall. Accidents happened. In the intervening years, Whistler has grown into a destination ski resort town; the highway has been widened, passing lanes installed and the rock face, largely, has been stabilized. Accidents still happen - most of them serious.

So, why would anyone balk at having the highway upgraded? Because, were it not for a 17-day Olympic event and the vested interests who will benefit, that highway would not be the priority highway for upgrade. Because it's expensive. But mostly because accidents happen when stupid people do stupid things with their vehicles and that's not going to stop just because we throw scarce money at the highway, or because the road is wider....in fact, it will likely get worse.

2. Residual Assets: Transit Infrastructure: Nose-to-tail buses:

No matter what the Olympic dream, ordinary Lower Mainland life will have to continue during the Games. It has been shown that, in order to get the numbers up to Whistler - competitors, coaches, team staff, tourists and workers - 700 [diesel] buses would be required. So let's mix those in with the regular transit/truck and vehicular traffic! Let's have some real entertainment and take them over the two bridges, along the upper levels, mix them in with Horseshoe Bay ferry traffic, and on up the Sea-to-Sky!

Assuming that idea gets the response it deserves, what are the alternatives? Burlington Northern/Sante Fe [Oops! sorry BC Rail] up to Squamish and shuttle buses from there? Passengers would still need to get over the bridges to the foot of Pemberton.

3. Residual Assets: "Rapid Transit" from Vancouver to YVR:

Now here's where we get into serious residuals and serious dollars. In 1999, the province returned to the GVRD all of the provincial gas tax it had collected. Of that money - 6-cents/litre or about \$150 million dollars - went to **service the debt on the existing SkyTrain Expo line**. Not operating costs, not the expansion line, not the LIM rail upgrade, just the debt for a system which had

proven itself incapable of achieving the stated goals of reducing auto trips in the region, reducing congestion and reducing pollution.

That was bad enough but then Glen Clark launched us into a new, expensive agreement with Bombardier Corporation Inc., to build the Millennium Line, a line which, for a fair length, runs right alongside the Expo route.

As with other projects of government, it has proven difficult to obtain complete and accurate details of the project - which began life as RTP-2000 but which had to change its name several times to fit the day. Nevertheless, it is generally accepted that, by the time the 40-year mortgage is paid off, long beyond the projected life of many of the components, the project will have cost taxpayers about \$4 Billion. Residual? Absolutely. Asset? You be the judge. I don't know about Council, but my grand-daughters will still be paying it off at least a decade after I'm pushing up daisies, and where I come from a mortgage is an IOU, not an asset.

Now, on the 2010 excuse, the Province and the City of Vancouver - for you can be sure that's who it's for - are campaigning for another 'residual asset', but at increased cost because no-one wants to consider the much lower-cost alternative and because Vancouver wants the whole nasty thing underground - out of sight and out of mind. Of course, they still want everyone else to help pay for yet another 40-year IOU - and that means the North Shore.

Think about it for a minute. How many North Shore residents, having had a nice stress-free holiday in Maui or beyond, want to return to YVR, lug suitcases down a tunnel, onto a SkyTrain subway, up the steps at the other end, onto the SeaBus, off at the other end, onto a bus and then walk for 15 minutes to home? Give me a break. Even most tourists would not want to face that.

My guess is that, with the blessing of the governments of the province and Vancouver, this is being undertaken because Jean Chretien wants it that way. Because Bombardier has funded a chair of Urban Transportation Studies at UBC. Because the company has a seat on the Bid Committee. Because Crown Corps like ICBC have our money invested in Bombardier, and because no-one is prepared to stand up and fight on behalf of the taxpayers.

Tell the people that if we don't win the Bid our kids will have nowhere to play and that our athletes, especially those in wheelchairs, won't be able to compete. Talk to them about residual assets and tell them that, if they don't support the bid, they'll be responsible for the homeless having nowhere to live. Is it any wonder that the 'Yes' side is falling for the scam hook, line and sinker? "Yes!" they cry. "It's about time the Feds sent some of our money back to us."

Well, if they think this is a case of getting our money back from Ottawa, consider this: BC drivers pay gas tax to Ottawa and the Province; Brazil and the WTO are mad at the Feds subsidizing Bombardier, so the PM thinks up a different scheme: Send some of the money to BC but attach it to "infrastructure" and to Bombardier's SkyTrain.

Then Bombardier engages in a P-3, Vancouver-YVR project, loans BC the money at higher than usual rates [some loans on the Millennium line are well over 10% interest]; charge fares over which TransLink has little or no control; make TransLink responsible for the underfunded operating costs; thanks very much North Shore. Presto! Bombardier goes home happy with its dollars and Brazil and the WTO are left banging their fists on the wall - along with those of us left paying the bill!

When this kind of transaction involves Swiss banks, there's a name for it. And for those who think it is I who is short of marbles, read Stevie Cameron's book *The Last Amigo* www.thelastamigo.com. Check the bibliography and references at the end. To my personal knowledge, as of the Fall of 2001, the RCMP were still investigating the fallout from this scandal.

She may now regret it but, shortly after taking up her appointment, TransLink CEO Pat Jacobsen said, in a speech at the Centennial Theatre, "There never was a business case for SkyTrain in this Region." She was right then, and her claim remains correct to this day. {Figures can be provided on request}

4. **Residual Assets: Trade and Convention Centre:**

As Council will know, this 'desperately needed' project has been on again:off again for years. As late as the turn of the year, a deal was in the works with a private consortium. That deal fell through because "It won't work without a casino attached." In other words, there would not be enough profit in the project to make it worthwhile for a private company. Yet somehow, using an opening ante of \$200 million of your money and mine, everything's going to be made better? Does anyone really believe that government - particularly a BC government - can do better than the private sector? Does anyone in this province really think that all it will take is the first \$200 million? Fastcats, Lions Gate Bridge.....Whoops! Here comes another IOU.

5. **Residual Assets: The Woodward's Building:**

A short while back, there was talk of a private company willing to pay around \$28 million for the old Woodward's building but they could not make a project work if they agreed to the number of not-for-profit residential units stipulated by the Province, so they walked away.

The next deal appears to have offered around \$16 million, but the province turned that down; not enough.

Then along comes the IOC requirement that the province demonstrate a real commitment to housing the homeless to support the 2010

Bid and, suddenly, Premier Campbell is willing to 'donate' the building for \$5.5 million to his old *alma mater*, the City of Vancouver. Not-for-profit units must still make up a considerable portion of the built project. [Any councillors want to go buy a unit to live next door to a drug addict?]

Of course, the Province and CoV didn't stop to think that, with the \$28 million first offered, plus DCC's and property taxes, they could have used half toward the cost of a dedicated, not-for-profit building away from the downtown eastside temptations, and used the other half towards, perhaps, recreation facilities for youth, or education, or health, or.....

So.....who is it who's *sans marbles*? You? Me? Those who, like Clr. Nixon and others actually read and question the guff they're being given? Or is it those who, even after all evidence to the contrary, still believe that this province is capable of undertaking a necessary capital project and carrying it through efficiently - on time and on budget?

Last night's presentation was little but a cynical show - trot out the kids, the athletes, pictures of Rick Hansen and the paralympics and, with a tear in the eye and violins in the background, tell everyone it's their time to shine but don't, at any cost, give the people a down-to-earth statement of the cost:benefits that Clr. Nixon asked for.

Now.....just in case anyone has the wrong impression from this letter: Like Clr. Nixon, I don't either want to be a Grinch. I take seriously our collective responsibility to the truly poor, the mentally ill and to those who wish to get off drugs. Would that the horrendous amount of taxes we pay could be more usefully spent to achieve positive progress solving those problems

As for the Olympics - someone at my Dad's office gave me a one-day ticket to the 1948 Olympics at Wembley Stadium. There I drank my first - and only - Coke... given to me by an exciting American boy. I saw sprinter Arthur Wint stretch his long, loooong legs over the finish line way ahead of everyone else. I tried out my French on a Parisian family trying to find their way in the London Underground. I loved the whole exciting day. I support the Olympics and believe in young kids striving for that dream. And, given the available budget! et I, like anyone else, love a party. I'd like to see the Olympics here, but I want to see an accurate business plan first.

But there's usually a reason why politicians are not up front giving project information to taxpayers...and it's usually because they don't want us to know the cost:benefit ratio when they're spending our money.

So, keep up the questions, Clr. Nixon and, bearing in mind that I would likely be one of the last to be accused of being left-wing, perhaps it would be a good idea for Council to look carefully at a presentation from the other side of the story. It also can be seen on the website of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives...I see no reason why this report should be any more suspect than a report out of the Fraser Institute, or any other right-wing group.

Yours truly,

Liz James

Ernie Crist <ernie_crist@dnv.org> wrote:

Dear Mrs. Bragg:

Your performance before Council in connection with the waterfront issue was outstanding and needs to be mentioned.

My motion re this matter will come before Council at the next meeting on March 3rd. There was no need for the "Olympics Delegation" item to take as long as it did.....

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