

Subject: [Fwd: TransLink Board: December 7, 2005: Right to vote challenged]

Date: Fri, 16 Dec 2005 15:59:35 -0800

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

Subject: TransLink Board: December 7, 2005: Right to vote challenged

Date: Fri, 16 Dec 2005 23:01:57 +0000 (GMT)

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The following article has just now been submitted for posting to www.northvancouverpolitics.com and is forwarded for your information

16 December 2005

TRANSLINK - A FAILURE OF REGIONAL GOVERNANCE?

The authority of December's lame-duck Board must be challenged

Even if they were to accept its low-balled figures at face value, regional taxpayers should question the legality of \$3.25-billion in spending initiatives which were approved by the TransLink Board on December 7th. Failing an early opportunity for them to do so, it is to be hoped that their newly-named North Shore TransLink representative will do so on their behalf.

TransLink spokesperson, Ken Hardie, confirmed that 9 of a possible 12 directors [should be 15 but the Province declines its right to fill the three other seats] attended the meeting, which was held at Langley City Hall. However, three of that nine had been defeated in the November elections, and one was replaced at the polls because she decided not to run for re-election.

Despite his own defeat, former Surrey Mayor Doug McCallum appeared to have no qualms about chairing the meeting, and neither the deposed North Shore and Maple Ridge directors, Barbara Sharp and Kathy Morse, nor Langley's retired Marlene Grinnell had any problem voting the expenditures - even though they have no more standing in the community than any Joe or Jane Taxpayer. If that's not considered a contravention of the Local Government Act/Community Charter, then it should be.

In fact, close examination of the GVTA Act, suggests there well may be a loophole which will enable the 'newly-unelected' directors to continue committing taxpayers to billion-dollar projects - but that does not make it right. Nor should citizens take that lying down.

None of the Directors had put forward a motion to change the date of the last meeting of the year, even though they knew months ago that any or all of them could be defeated at the polls to be held 17 days earlier. They also knew that December 7th would extend beyond the day on which the newly-elected candidates would be sworn into office.

This has nothing to do with the appropriateness or otherwise of the decisions that were made on the 7th. It has everything to do with the fact that four of the people who committed citizens of this province to over 3-billion dollars in liabilities, at best, had no moral authority to do so.

Insofar as the five North Shore municipalities are concerned, there is another problem with the TransLink Board, and it concerns the way in which the single representative they are allowed under the Act is chosen. It has been the habit to rotate the representative through the mayors of the three largest communities. Regardless of community size that system, in itself, is undemocratic because Bowen Island and Lions Bay have many transportation issues of their own --- most notably Lions Bay. For a while, the rotation went smoothly, albeit with no opportunity for public input to the decision.

Last year, however, former West Vancouver Mayor, Ron Wood, announced to his Council that he had spoken with City Mayor Sharp and they had agreed that, if she wanted to continue on TransLink for another year, it was OK by West Vancouver. So she did, voting her preferences with little or no opportunity for public input to the directions she took.

Fast forward to the local elections of 2005, during which all mayoralty candidates avowed their intention to embrace and open and

accessible style of governance, with improved opportunity for public involvement. So how did they handle the very first opportunity to practice what they preached? Mayors of the three larger North Shore communities put their heads together and decided that NV District Mayor Walton should take the first kick at the TransLink cat. In 2007, West Vancouver will at last get a look-in, while City Mayor Mussatto pulled the short straw, and will wear the burgeoning TransLink taxation 'cloak' for 2008 - another election year.....all of this happened with not a moment of opportunity for public input or comment.

Talk about taxation without representation. Has there ever been a better reason to change the system so that regional politicians can be directly elected and held to account by the people they tax?

Liz James
North Shore taxpayer

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