

Dear Editor:

The BC-CTV exclusive lead story on Wednesday's newscast carried the news that a whistle-blower had, at last, taken the cap off the volcano....there are problems with the SkyTrain Mark II cars, problems serious enough to warrant a \$43 million fix - at least that is today's estimate.

Well, well, well. Now doesn't the truth have a habit of raising its head at the most inconvenient of times? No respecter of political expedience truth, like a volcanic eruption, just insists on making itself heard. Oh, darn!

Just two days ago, Finance Minister Collins gave British Columbians the bad news that they are facing a \$4.4 billion deficit...to say nothing of the even more serious provincial debt. But, in the Minister's long list of increased ferry fares, property, gasoline and other taxes, the only reference to the \$4-billion SkyTrain project was oblique and barely heard when he talked about the 2-cents/litre gas tax and the \$20 property tax for TransLink.

The Minister thus continued Mr. Campbell's own policy of deafening silence on the single largest capital project in BC. Why? Where were the core reviews on this one? Maybe ex-Vancouver City Manager, ex-TransLink CEO, Ken Dobell, who is now a Deputy in Mr. Campbell's office could explain, but we certainly haven't been able to get at the facts, despite much questioning over at least three years - to the Auditor-General, to Mr. Campbell and to many others.

Last November, GVRD ratified TransLink's plan to collect additional taxes sufficient to allow the agency to open up the Millennium line. But wait! It was suddenly discovered there were problems with the cars, and the opening was delayed. Then a couple of the old cars [for which a multi-million dollar refit had been undertaken] were put on the line to allow for an 'opening', but nothing much else was said, except some noncommittal TransLink/RTP PR communication to the effect that there were problems with some of the doors on the new cars and everything had to be checked out 'for safety reasons' .....nothing, that is, until last night.

So CAGE went back to some of its own contacts and this is what we were told: In pretrials, apparently, every time the Mark II cars came anywhere close to a curve, they threatened to leave the track. Further, the word is that Bombardier is "steamed" because the company was "given the wrong specs by the local people and the cars don't work on the Millennium track". "And that's not the half of it," our contact continued. "If truth be known, half the contractors on the job were ready to walk several times, because paycheques were going as much as three months behind."

We followed this up with questions about what was happening at the 'manufacturing' building - remember Glen Clark's multi-million dollar building that was going to provide so many manufacturing jobs? The answer? "I don't know. I've tried to find out, to get a peek but you can't get anywhere near it. You practically have your lunch-bucket searched! Don't know if they're fixing rails, or cars, or if there's absolutely nothing going on in there."

What does all this mean for the Liberal government? Well, assuming the information we have been given is correct, this is the CAGE take: Despite the fact that Glen Clark was already embroiled in his Pacificat fiasco, he armed himself with brief-cases full of taxpayers' dollars and lurched right on into his land-based memorial - the SkyTrain Millennium line, and that's where it should have stayed - right smack in the lap of Glen Clark and the incompetent NDP. But the longer the Campbell government persists in saying nothing, exposing nothing, the more certain it is that the problem will become a fiasco that the Liberals own. Or, to quote former BC Attorney-General, now West Vancouver Councillor Allan Williams, "If you thought the fast ferries were a fiasco, this will be ten times worse!"

The people of this Province [because all British Columbians are paying the bill] want the whole story. They want the truth Mr. Campbell. It's their money that's being wasted, and it's long past time they were levelled with.

Sincerely,

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