

Subject: Oil and water: Or TransLink and democracy

Date: Wed, 31 Aug 2005 07:28:14 +0100 (BST)

From: Elizabeth James <cagebc@yahoo.com>

To: Mayor Sharp and Council <council@cnv.org>

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30 August 2005

Dear Mayor Sharp:

It has been brought to my attention that representatives of TransLink are to announce this coming Friday that it has purchased a parcel of the former BC Rail lands. As I understand it, the intention is to use the land as the site of a bus depot to replace the out of date current depot on 3rd Street in the City. No one would deny that a solution to the depot question is overdue and needs to be found. Nevertheless, in a country that claims to be a democracy, I suggest that the manner in which this decision has been arrived at is nothing short of appalling.

Before continuing, I would like to remind you that, sitting as you do on the TransLink Board as the representative of five North Shore councils, your primary responsibility is to those communities. In fact, as I said to the Board at one of its meetings in the summer of 2004, each director sits at that table only by virtue of the Oath they swore following their election in 2002.

That oath of office required each member of every Council to uphold the Local Government Act. Specifically, mayors and councillors swore to provide "stewardship of the public assets" of their community, and to "foster the current and future economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the community."

Further, in a document which sets out to explain the transition from the LGA to the new Community Charter, the provincial government defines one of its purported intents as follows:

ACCOUNTABILITY in fair and open decision processes, with local government accessible and answerable to citizens.

How is any taxpayer to know whether or not a bus depot in that location is, in the long term, the best decision? They have no information upon which to base their opinion. It may be that a District purchase of the land for other purposes makes more economic and social sense.

Nothing, I repeat *nothing* about the decision at issue has conveyed even a modicum of courteous respect for the autonomy of the District of North Vancouver within its own boundaries. Nothing, I repeat *nothing* about the manner in which you have participated in this decision, persuades me that you even understand the rights of the elected bodies of the four other North Shore communities. The right to be fully informed on all aspects of the options available, or the decision itself prior to its finalization, in order that they may be able to provide the best possible advice to their citizens for due consideration. How would you react if the District were to dump a development in the City, without so much as a by-your-leave? And I can only guess how apoplectic soon-to-be-senator Campbell would be if we dumped a bus depot on West Fourth; or Mayor McCallum if we dumped one in his Hazelmere with nothing more than a, "Oh, sorry Sir, we forgot to tell you...so sad."

Last week, Council of the District of North Vancouver solemnly set about preliminary discussion of its ideas and visions for the area. They did so in virtual ignorance of what was afoot behind their backs. I say 'virtual' because, even at the time, I felt that at least two members of Council knew more than they were letting on - one of whom displayed obvious agitation when it was suggested that any decision on future use of the lands in question should await additional information, provision of a detailed Staff report and input from the public. In other words: **ACCOUNTABILITY** in fair and open decision processes, with local government accessible and answerable to citizens.

TransLink has pulled some dubious stunts on more occasions that I care to remember. However, if this announcement goes ahead as currently planned, you have my commitment that I will do everything in my power to see that you - and any other local politician who kept this information from taxpayers - are replaced this coming November, and that TransLink, in its current form, is disbanded in favour of a directly elected transportation agency.

In closing, I will say again that I recognise a solution must be found to the long-standing issue of the bus depot. I am not convinced, however, that it is appropriate to site the new facility - with all of its attendant traffic, dirt, carcinogenic diesel fumes and noise, right in the path of the overall redevelopment of the Marine Drive/Norgate area. For TransLink to make this arbitrary move, apparently with the blessing of you and your District counterpart, is arrogant and totally unacceptable.

Yours truly,

Elizabeth James

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