

Subject: Oil and water: TransLink and Democracy

Date: Wed, 31 Aug 2005 18:38:37 +0100 (BST)

From: Elizabeth James <cagebc@yahoo.com>

To: "Hardie, Ken" <Ken_Hardie@translink.bc.ca>

CC: daniel.jarvis.mla@leg.bc.ca, ralph.sultan.mla@leg.bc.ca, katherine.whittred.mla@leg.bc.ca, "James Ridge, CAO & Irwin Torry" <james_ridge@dnv.org>, Mayor and Council <postmaster@city.burnaby.bc.ca>, Mayor & Council <council@dnv.org>, Mayor & Council <council@cnv.org>, FONVCA <fonvca@fonvca.org>

31 August 2005

Dear Mr. Hardie:

Thank you for your email; what you say sounds so reasonable, doesn't it? Problem is that, politically-speaking, "reasonable" usually equates to one of two options: (1) Back-peddle away because a trial balloon has created too much heat; or, (2) keep piling on the ointment to lull the public's senses while you do what you will with democracy.

Taking your points in order:

- **Premature reaction:** When the announcement is scheduled for the day after tomorrow, on the Friday before the Labour Day weekend - when everyone is engaged in the last weekend of the summer hiatus - it is not only a deviously-calculated move on the part of TransLink, it leaves citizens with little or no time in which to do background research, so that they may come to an informed decision. Premature? Not soon enough, I'd say.
- **Re-zoning:** Both TransLink and its North Shore representative, Mayor Sharp, are fully cognizant of the fact that they have put District Council and its citizens over a motherhood barrel. Need a new depot? BC Rail no longer using the land? Land tucked away in an apparent industrial area. Where's the beef?

Well, the beef is that there is every reason to suppose that the District, in its attempts to seek out new-job producing, "green" light industry and/or live/work options, and following receipt of the input of its citizens, would have chosen an entirely different option for that area. This is particularly so when one considers that a joint City/District committee has worked for over a year to develop priorities for revitalization of the parallel Marine Drive throughway, following departure of most of the car dealerships into the new Northshore Automall.

Once the BC Rail "non-sale" went through, and with hints of major developments on adjacent Squamish Lands, the Marine Drive committee was taking all of that into consideration in its work. For TransLink to arbitrarily hijack that process, by throwing hundreds of units of diesel-fume bus traffic along 1st Avenue, is not only arrogant, it is a case of planning in ignorance of all of the pertinent facts. But then that's a comfortable position for TransLink, isn't it? [Where does the RAV design/budget stand today?]

Once again, my guess is that, with a local election just a few months away, TransLink and Mayor Sharp knew *exactly* what they planned to do to the District - and likely District Mayor Harris just smiled and went along with it.

- **Suitability of site and environmental review:** Suitability for whom? Certainly not District citizens who, naively I admit, still expect that TransLink will pay at least a show of lip-service to their opinions and priorities. Environmental review? To mirror that done on the Cambie Street RAV route? A pox on governments' ideas of environmental review. As for costs - if the budgetary process is anything like that performed on the RAV project, I guess the five North Shore municipalities can expect even higher TransLink fees/taxes on next year's property bills.
- **The final decision:** Citizens may, indeed, be too far behind the political eight ball to avert the bus depot decision which, as you say, will be made by the TransLink Board.

However, I suggest to you that "the final decision" will be made by the voters - this coming November. And that, I hope, will include a decision as to whether or not citizens are prepared to continue to allow unaccountable regional boards to ride roughshod over their communities.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth James
[604] 988-2066

"Hardie, Ken" <Ken_Hardie@translink.bc.ca> wrote:

Subject: FW: Oil and water: TransLink and Democracy
Date: Wed, 31 Aug 2005 09:47:18 -0700
From: "Hardie, Ken" <Ken_Hardie@translink.bc.ca>
To: <cagebc@yahoo.com>

CC: <daniel.jarvis.mla@leg.bc.ca>, <ralph.sultan.mla@leg.bc.ca>, <katherine.whittred.mla@leg.bc.ca>

Ms. James,

All of this reaction is premature, given that the only information out now is an invitation that was sent to inform people of the announcement on Friday. On Friday, there will be a news release issued that will outline the following:

TransLink's agreement to purchase the property is conditional:

1. The property must be rezoned for the intended use. This is a process that the District will manage, which undoubtedly involves public hearings.
2. The property must prove suitable for a transit operation. Obviously at this point, we believe it is, otherwise we would not have tried to buy it.
3. The property will be subject to an environmental review. The nature, extent and cost of any remediation required will need to be factored into the ultimate decision to complete the purpose....which is:
4. The final decision to complete the sale will be made by TransLink's Board, given that the other conditions can be met.

In addition, there is nothing unusual about the process to date -- this is exactly the same process and sequencing that took place when TransLink purchased the property for the Vancouver Transit Centre. Property purchases are always confidential while final details and agreements are worked out. The confidentiality clause in the agreement was only lifted by the seller early this week.

Ken Hardie
TransLink Communication
Office: 604-453-4606
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-----Original Message-----

From: Elizabeth James [mailto:cagebc@yahoo.com]
Sent: Tuesday, August 30, 2005 11:37 PM
To: Knight, Bill; Dan Jarvis MLA; Ralph Sultan MLA; Katherine Whittred MLA
Subject: Oil and water: TransLink and Democracy

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
[604] 988-2066

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