

**Subject:** COSTCO

**From:** Elizabeth James <rimcoenterprises@yahoo.com>

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**To:** Mayor Walton & Council <council@dnv.org>

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10/16 April 2007

Dear Mayor Walton, Members of Council:

I have just received an email from a Norgate resident on the matter of the Costco rezoning application on the former BC Rail Lands. If the information it contains is correct, it will not be an exaggeration to say that I am furious.

This Canadian company, putting an excellent business reputation on the line, was set to offer District residents well-paid, clean, *Canadian* jobs and property taxes - exactly what the District said it wanted on that site. It also offered residents quality goods at affordable prices. The compromise, I realize, would have been the significant variance on building size. Even so, given willing and open minds, the development could have been made to work to the benefit of District residents as well as for Costco.

From an onlooker's perspective, after participating in many meetings with staff, the company appeared to be doing its level best to comply with all of the moving goalposts set before it. Company representatives suffered without comment the discourteous indignity of its February appearance before Council when, along with applicants for a separate development, they were forced to sit through Council's agenda until 10 minutes before midnight - only to discover that, once again, the District was not ready to put the matter to Public Hearing. I do not suggest here that it would benefit residents to have applications fast-tracked inappropriately. But when real estate purchases hang in the balance, some accommodation needs to be made for timely closing dates to the contract.

Earlier on, prior to that last meeting, I strove *not* to believe the escalating suspicions of some residents - viz. that Council was dragging its feet, as it and/or TransLink looked for a way to revive the idea of locating a polluting, traffic-congesting operation on that site.

A bus depot, though admittedly important to us all, will offer few, if any, *new* jobs and would be an operation that could not by any stretch of the imagination be called clean...and don't even get me talking about the automobile-equivalencies of bus-diesel pollutants.

As for the refusal - by BC Rail and, ergo, the Province - to grant Costco a Certificate of Compliance, were it to clear the site of all contaminants *known to Costco purchasers at this date*... what could be the reason for that? Cynical onlookers might be forgiven for asking, "Does BC Rail believe contamination of the site to be more widespread than residents have been told?" Do I now have to concede that residents were 'right on' in their suspicions? Am I to accept that some BC Rail and/or Council minds were *not* open and willing?

Many people in British Columbia - myself included - still are unhappy about the decision to divest the people of British Columbia of their valuable railway asset, *and* about the manner in which it was done. Today, there are many in the District who are equally disturbed about the process by which the TransLink Board decided it would be a good idea to dump yet another bus depot onto these about-to-be valuable, *taxable*, lands in the District?

According to material which appears as background to this week's upcoming meeting of FONVCA, TransLink claims it is no longer interested in the BC Rail site. However, as Council knows, the *current* TransLink Board will soon be a thing of the past. What then? Has Council received reliable assurances from Minister Falcon that he, too, has given up on the idea? If not, I very much doubt that a new era TransLink would, in the longer-term, either honour a decision of the defunct Board, or pay taxes - any more than do a growing number of other GVRD/provincial entities.

In my opinion, based upon the information I have seen so far, Costco would have good grounds for believing that neither BC Rail nor Council - had been sincere in negotiating its application...and I'd have to agree. One way or another, Costco didn't stand a chance, did it?

Just over a week ago, I had a really positive example of Costco's approach to doing business, and almost wrote to Council to contrast that experience with Council's inconsiderate February meeting. That I chose not to do so, was in the spirit of the upcoming Easter holiday.

But it seems every time I give myself a good talking to, and persuade myself that I have to trust some governments at least some of the time, a revelation like this happens to convince me I was right all along. And I'm pretty well at the stage where I'm ready to give up on looking for unwavering openness and transparency in Canada's so-called democratic system - especially in this province.

Yours truly,

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**Postscript:**

Members of Council may have heard business reports released a few days ago - China maintains its multi-billion-dollar global trade surplus position. The trade imbalances between China and two western countries are significant -- #1 is the U.S. and #2 ... is Canada. For those who do not know why, this is largely caused by the export of North American jobs and raw materials to China and the import of cheap goods - manufactured by cheap labour in a country that gives only a passing nod to the environment our politicians say they care so much about.

As a recent Frontline programme documented on a PBS channel, companies like Wal-Mart lead the charge - indeed exist - on this type of trade, and whole U.S. towns are closing their doors as a consequence.

See: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/walmart/etc/script.html> - or better yet, purchase a copy of the DVD.

Wal-Mart must be popping the corks in North Vancouver.

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