



February 6, 2014

His Worship  
Mayor Richard Walton, Chair  
Mayors' Council on Regional Transportation  
287 Nelson's Court, Suite 400  
New Westminster BC V3L 0E7

Reference: 224264

Dear Mayor Walton:

**Re: TransLink Governance and Referendum**

Allow me to congratulate you on your recent re-election as Chair of the Mayors' Council on Regional Transportation.

The provincial government and the Mayors' Council have a common goal: to ensure that traffic congestion is reduced to improve everyone's commute in support of a strong economy and great quality of life for the region. As we move forward to attain this goal, the questions before us are 'what is the plan or vision to achieve that', 'who pays' and 'how much'.

Today, within its transportation service region, TransLink supports the operations of its regional transit system through taxes and fees like property tax, gas tax, and transit fares. To support expanded transit and road networks for the region, some have publicly advocated for new revenue sources, in addition to those taxes and fees Metro Vancouver taxpayers already pay.

The position of the provincial government is clear: if Metro Vancouver taxpayers are being asked to pay new taxes or fees, on top of those that local governments and TransLink currently collect, then taxpayers will have their say through a public referendum.

**Transportation Referendum**

The provincial government has stated that to minimize cost, maximize voter participation and provide the best opportunity for broad public discussion on transportation expansion and how it is funded, holding the referendum concurrent with the 2014 local government elections in Metro Vancouver makes the most sense.

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Some members of the Mayors' Council have stated, however, that not enough time remains before November to adequately deliver a referendum – to develop a fully costed plan, to finalize the question and to ensure the region's taxpayers have time to fully consider what they will be asked to vote on.

Therefore, the provincial government is willing to extend the referendum window to no later than June 30, 2015. To ensure sufficient time is available for in-depth public discussion, this extension depends on the Mayors' Council articulating and presenting a regional vision, with specific priorities and costs.

If a vision is not ready by June 30, 2014, the next date the provincial government is willing to consider a referendum is in conjunction with the subsequent local government election. This later date would require the Mayors' Council to use existing funding sources if it wishes to expand transit in the interim period.

If the referendum is held in November 2014 or prior to June 30, 2015, the provincial government will compensate local governments for any related administration costs.

With respect to the referendum question, the provincial government is determined that if voters are asked to pay new taxes and fees for expanded transportation, then the vision they are paying to support and the benefits they will receive must be clearly articulated and understood.

I believe the Mayors' Council, which comprises the senior elected officials of the region, is best placed to develop and articulate a clear regional transportation vision, ensuring it balances the region's priorities, is affordable and supports the movement of people and goods.

Mayors have suggested the foundation for this vision exists within TransLink's long-range plan. I agree this plan is a start – but as noted, a clear, detailed, fully costed vision, with specific priorities and project phasing, is needed. This will frame the referendum question for the Mayors' Council and fully inform the public on the decision that is theirs to make.

Two further points with respect to new funding sources: first, if new funding sources are identified and proposed, they must be generated within the region, and not subsidized by taxpayers in the rest of the province. In addition, the provincial government will not permit new funding to be collected from the provincial transportation system situated in the region.

Second, the government recognizes that the timing and viability of major projects is dependent on senior government funding. The provincial government is prepared to commit funding one-third of major capital projects, provided funding is restricted to major new rapid transit capital and the replacement of the Pattullo Bridge, and that it fits within the provincial capital plan. Furthermore, we will work with local governments and advocate for matching contributions from the Government of Canada.

### **TransLink Governance**

To support the Mayors' Council and TransLink in their development of a clear transportation vision, the provincial government will put forward legislation that significantly increases the ability of the Mayors' Council to establish TransLink's long-term strategies and to approve its plans and projects. The Mayors' Council will be granted approval powers over TransLink's 30-year strategy, as well as over a fully-funded rolling 10-year investment plan.

I accept the Mayors' Council's frustration with the current planning and review process involving base and supplemental plans. The provincial government proposes that the 10-year plan replace those plans, and be updated only when necessary – but not less than every three years. TransLink's board will be expected to prepare budgets, oversee operations and implement plans consistent with Mayors' Council approved strategies and plans.

To reinforce an enhanced policy role for the Mayors' Council, we also propose to consolidate the TransLink Commissioner's responsibilities into the Mayors' Council, including approval of fare adjustments, oversight of customer satisfaction and complaint processes and oversight of the sale of major assets.

Consistent with this expanded governance role, the Mayors' Council would, for example, also have a voice in establishing the remuneration of TransLink's board and executive. Recognizing that these new responsibilities and accountabilities will place greater demands on the Mayors' Council, we will ensure that the Mayors' Council has appropriate resources to support this expanded role.


With these added resources to support its efforts, and to strengthen the relationship between the Mayors' Council and the TransLink board, it is my hope that the Chair and Vice Chair of the Mayor's Council will assume the two positions currently available to the Mayor's Council on the TransLink board and thus fully participate in the board's deliberations moving forward.

It is our intention to introduce legislation in the next session of the Legislature to facilitate these TransLink governance improvements. We will also introduce legislation to facilitate the referendum process and clarify government's commitment to reimbursing local governments for the associated costs.

In conclusion, the Mayors' Council has asked for governance changes to strengthen its role in establishing TransLink's long-term strategy and plans. This letter outlines my government's commitment to acting on that request. In turn, I challenge the Mayors' Council to define a regional transportation vision with priorities and costs, to work with government as the Council considers funding sources and finalizes a referendum question, and to publicly advocate for the success of a referendum that will support the region's objectives for decades to come.

I look forward to discussing these commitments with the Mayor's Council at our next meeting on February 14, 2014.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Todd G. Stone', written in a cursive style.

Todd G. Stone  
Minister

Copy to: Premier Christy Clark