

viewpoint

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114-400 BROOKSBANK AVE., NORTH VANCOUVER, B.C. V7J 2C2 MATT BLAIR, PUBLISHER

No. 1 priority

The province's plans for a \$30-million modern Phibbs transit hub are awash in many upgrades. But a public washroom where commuters might answer the call of nature isn't among them.

This is a significant oversight.

While authorities insist the new transit hub will be more "friendly and welcoming" and could even contain a coffee shop one day, bus riders have told stories about desperate travellers discovering a dearth of facilities dashing into the bushes to relieve themselves.

The upgrade oversight seems even more ludicrous given that bus drivers will be getting a new "comfort station" including toilets, at Phibbs. Surely planners who see the need to provide commodes for drivers might also be able to grasp the need for the same among the 16,000 passengers who use the exchange every day? Particularly as

Phibbs serves those who are typically on longer trips requiring multiple transfers. For a transit system looking to make riding the bus a convenient and comfortable option, omitting washrooms from the plans is decidedly not a smart idea.

The potential for vandalism and for the use of washrooms as a place to conduct criminal business or do drugs appear to be the biggest concerns identified.

Yet in recent years we've also realized that the provision of public washrooms is a basic service, a nod to common decency. Airports have washrooms. So do ferries. And SeaBus terminals. And streets in downtown Vancouver.

It seems silly to have to point out that toilets aren't a luxury that only some kinds of travellers get to access.

It's time for TransLink and the province to flush this loo-lacking plan in favour of a more laudatory, lavatory-enabled option.



Early election could help Horgan's successor keep NDP centred

The early departure of John Horgan as B.C. premier raises the very real possibility that the next provincial election will be called well before the Oct. 19, 2024, date that is currently scheduled.

Horgan's successor (who appears almost certainly to be current Attorney-General David Eby) may find it tempting to call an early vote rather than trying to govern for two more years without facing the electorate.

Those two years will likely see a string of controversies and hot-button issues begin to accumulate. Rising inflation, a deteriorating health care system, high housing costs and various weather disasters are going to make governing increasingly difficult for anyone.

On top of that, Eby (assuming he becomes the next leader) will find himself under pressure from various activist wings of the BC NDP to abandon Horgan's

"progressive centrism" approach and embrace a more left wing, environmental activist direction.

Some of that pressure may come from members of his own caucus. North Vancouver-Lonsdale MLA Bowinn Ma recently posted a multi-part thread on Twitter in which she insisted the next NDP leader had to be what she called a "Climate Champion."

And she defined that as a leader who will agree that "addressing #ClimateEmergency is a moral imperative, who will take an unambiguous stance against the expansion of fossil fuel extraction, including LNG [liquefied natural gas], and end measures designed to incentivize the industry."

Ma, who is a cabinet minister of state for Infrastructure, appears to be now opposing a key part of her government's economic plan: the LNG industry.

Ma is certainly not alone among New Democrats who want a more aggressive approach when it comes to fighting climate change. Others want a complete ban on the logging of all old-growth timber, a move that would bring the B.C. forest industry to its knees.

Still others want a ban on fracking (used to extract natural gas), an even higher carbon tax and more action taken against resource industries.

Will Eby be able to stand up to the pressure coming from what undoubtedly will be a much louder protest wing of his party?

Horgan was able to keep the environmental movement at bay throughout his time as premier. Unlike his predecessors of NDP governments in the 1990s, he was not panicked by large demonstrations aimed at government policies.

Pulling the plug early and securing a new four-year mandate would further silence those internal critics, as well as drive a dagger through the heart of a still shaky BC Liberal Party.

An early election call would also put the BC Liberals at a distinct disadvantage in an important area: money. The party is simply not fundraising at anywhere near the same pace as the NDP, which has about a two-to-one edge and which is financially poised to run a much better-funded election campaign.

Of course, perhaps Eby will want to steer the government in a completely



Should he step into B.C. Premier John Horgan's shoes, Attorney General David Eby will face pressure from the BC NDP's environmentalist wing to pursue more climate-friendly policies. GOVERNMENT OF B.C.

different direction, one that is closer to those environmental activist positions. We shall see.

In any event, do not rule out an early election. The next NDP premier may want to dive head-first into the election pool well before the waters get too roiled and choppy, which they undoubtedly will.

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View From
The Ledge

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