

SkyTrain ultimatum



By DON HAUKA
Staff Reporter

No SkyTrain — no housing.
That's the threat Coquitlam Mayor Lou Sekora is levelling at Victoria.

The flamboyant, maverick mayor says he'll hold a Sacred mega-housing plan hostage unless he gets SkyTrain in his district.

Sekora says he's waited four years for Victoria to make good a promise to build a track along Brunette Avenue or along Burnaby's Edmonds Street to Lougheed Mall.

And he's angered by Transit Minister Rita Johnston's decision to bypass Coquitlam, in favor of her Surrey riding.

Sekora warns that unless the hard-nosed transit boss has a change of heart, he'll nix Victoria's plan for a 600-hectare (1,500-acre) housing site on the Westwood Plateau in northeast Coquitlam by refusing to rezone it.

"The council will hold an immediate emergency meeting if she asks for \$115 million for the Surrey extension to Whalley," said Sekora. "They may find the whole of the Westwood Plateau on hold."

Bill Vander Zalm, then municipal affairs minister, first announced planned extensions to Coquitlam

and Surrey Dec. 6, 1980, as part of the original SkyTrain plans.

But Johnston insists her Surrey decision is final.

The Surrey-Newton MLA and former alderman says she expects to receive cabinet approval for her Whalley extension this fall.

Sekora says the plan is foolish because there are more riders from Coquitlam. A recent study shows a Whalley extension will boost ridership by 10 per cent, while a Coquitlam route would bump it by 90 per cent, he said.

He says the Edmonds-Lougheed Mall route would cost \$6 per rider while the Whalley track costs between \$12 and \$15 per patron.

But Johnston says Sekora's way off track.

"It's very irresponsible. It's a grudge rationale," she said, referring to his threat to can the B.C. Enterprises housing development.

Johnston says the next stretch of track will be to Surrey Place Mall in Whalley — and that's that.

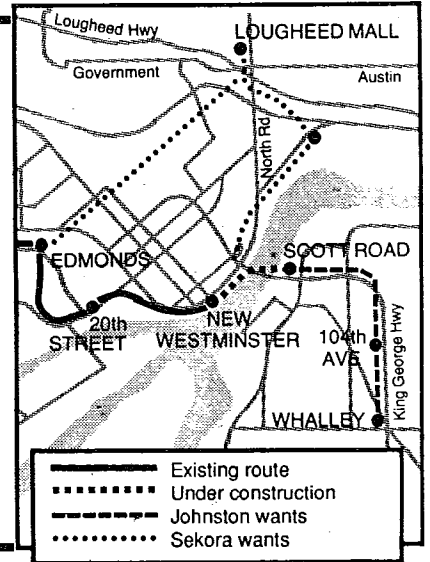
She said it's crucial to get Surrey commuters into Vancouver and Vancouver shoppers to Surrey.

Dave Driscoll, transit commissioner and Port Moody mayor, backs Sekora's plan.

But he says Johnston has warned commission members to butt out.

Coquitlam Mayor Lou Sekora, left, brandishes a Detour sign to emphasize his anger that SkyTrain extension is to go to Surrey (see map at right) but not to his municipality. So angry is Sekora that he's threatening to hold up rezoning for a provincially backed housing development.

Staff photo



News Services

WELLAND, Ont. — Robert Meehan got lucky, and his family didn't.

Meehan struck it rich with a lottery win — then ran out on his wife of 19 years and three stepsons.

Meehan, 44, of Welland, won \$100,000 in the Wintario Lottery two weeks ago.

But he didn't tell his family. The night before he collected

his prize, June 14, he packed his bags and disappeared, his wife says.

"He didn't even leave a note," said Joan Meehan, 48.

She said her husband, a tow-truck driver, was the family's only wage-earner and his departure has left the family in dire financial straits.

"I have to move out of my home because I can't afford the rent."

A lawyer has told the unem-

ployed woman she might not get any of the lottery money, but she says she just wants some financial support.

"If and when he's located we'll try to get some support," she said.

Joan has been trying to track him down on her own but hasn't had much luck.

Her husband last showed up in Ancaster, Ont., the town where he grew up, and took his relatives out to dinner.

BIG WINNER ACTS SMALL