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## SkyTrain official resigns over leaked project memo; [5\* Edition]

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### Abstract (Summary)

"I am confident of the data - which now points clearly at Edmonds-Cariboo," wrote [Tom Parkinson]. "Port Moody, Coquitlam and Port Coquitlam have endorsed this choice.

"The New Westminster members of the Coquitlam advisory committee and (former Burnaby mayor Bill) Lewarne say they will do so at the very end, leaving (Burnaby Ald. Doug) Drummond as a single no-sayer. Don't think I can make it unanimous."

New Westminster Ald. Mal Hughes resigned from the committee Monday after receiving a copy of the leaked memo from [Mike O'Connor]. Hughes said the memo compromised his position by wrongly implying he had made up his mind before the public meetings.

### Full Text (735 words)

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BC Transit has forced its project administrator on the Coquitlam SkyTrain extension to step down over a leaked memo that suggests the project is rigged.

Transit president Mike O'Connor says he asked for and received Tom Parkinson's resignation as administrator on Wednesday.

"He won't be dealing with the public process on the Coquitlam extension," O'Connor said. "It wasn't possible, given what he said in the memo, for him to continue in that role.

"He is a superb electrical engineer and technician, but he screwed up."

Transit spokesman Diane Gendron said today Parkinson will continue in his other capacities with the Crown corporation, including working on the specifications for new SkyTrain vehicles.

"We will continue to use him for his technical expertise and in preparing technical information for the Vancouver to Richmond line," Gendron said.

"But he won't have anything to do with the Coquitlam project . . . or with working with citizens' advisory groups. He won't have anything to do with the public process in any of our areas."

A Coquitlam advisory committee is studying two possible extensions - Edmonds-Cariboo and New Westminster-Brunette - and public meetings will be scheduled in May.

But Parkinson's April 16 memo to O'Connor indicates the committee has already selected the Edmonds route.

"I am confident of the data - which now points clearly at Edmonds-Cariboo," wrote Parkinson. "Port Moody, Coquitlam and Port Coquitlam have endorsed this choice.

**"The New Westminster members of the Coquitlam advisory committee and (former Burnaby mayor Bill) Lewarne say they will do so at the very end, leaving (Burnaby Ald. Doug) Drummond as a single no-sayer. Don't think I can make it unanimous."**

Parkinson declined to comment Thursday, but O'Connor insisted the memo is wrong and that a decision has not been made.

"The Edmonds alternative - from a ridership, cost-per-ride, distance to downtown - is better. But that doesn't mean it's the one that is going to be chosen. There are other reasons to choose . . ."

"What I think Tom meant to say was that the committee, I think, accepts that technical data that that route has the best technical merit."

But MLA Anita Hagen (NDP-New Westminster) doubts Parkinson simply misinterpreted the situation.

"It's pretty hard for one to read that memo and think that it's an isolated decision."

Hagen called on Premier Rita Johnston, the minister responsible for BC Transit until she became premier, to step in and replace her

political appointees.

"Premier Johnston stacked this committee with Socreds and now we're seeing the results - a rigged decision before local people have had their say," Hagen said.

Johnston denied a decision on the route has been made. "I have really kept myself quite removed from both the Richmond and the Coquitlam extension committee work. It seems to me that that is the logical way if we want the decision to be made from the bottom up.

"There are representatives there from Coquitlam and Burnaby council, as well as the former mayor of Burnaby, the former mayor of New Westminster, so I think that we came up with a reasonable balance of people who have a feel for the citizens who will be affected."

New Westminster Ald. Mal Hughes resigned from the committee Monday after receiving a copy of the leaked memo from O'Connor. Hughes said the memo compromised his position by wrongly implying he had made up his mind before the public meetings.

Hughes said he already had serious questions about the committee's effectiveness anyway.

"I wasn't quite sure of my influence. The information (from the technical committee) seemed to be pointing toward a conclusion and didn't seem to be leaving alternatives."

But committee chairman Tom Baker, one of Johnston's appointees, rejected charges the process is rigged.

"I would say, if the fix is in, what am I doing here?"

"I know that I never make a final decision until I've heard from everybody that's got anything to say."

**Drummond would say only he's "concerned with the process."**

Lewarne could not be reached for comment.

The New Westminster-Brunette corridor would cost \$225 million to build and offer travel from Lougheed Mall to downtown Vancouver in 35 minutes. The Edmonds corridor would cost \$245 million to build and take passengers from the mall to downtown in 26 minutes. Projected ridership for 1996 would be 8.8 million on the Brunette route and 10.6 million on Edmonds.

#### **[Illustration]**

Map; map showing proposed skytrain route to Coquitlam

Credit: VANSUN

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