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Jim Pattison to oversee transit tax cash if Yes wins

Richmond's mayor hopes appointment will build public confidence

by Jeff Nagel and Matthew Hoekstra

Black Press

Billionaire businessman Jim Pattison gave transit referendum Yes forces a lift Thursday by agreeing to chair a committee to oversee the flow of money if voters approve the proposed sales tax increase.

The move aims to bolster the assurances of the Metro Vancouver mayors' council that money from the 0.5 per cent Congestion Improvement Tax will go to the projects set out in the accompanying plan, and not be misspent by TransLink as opponents predict.

Richmond Mayor Malcolm Brodie acknowledged one of the main hesitations of voters is a lack of confidence in the new money being well-spent. He hopes Pattison's presence will give voters a renewed sense of confidence in the plan for TransLink.

"Jim Pattison's reputation—going way past Expo 86, but particularly with Expo 86—was that he was a very wise steward of public money," said Brodie. "I'm hoping this will give people confidence that the money will be well-spent, it will be used for the priorities set out in the mayors' vision."

Pattison told Black Press he intends to vote Yes in the referendum.

"For me, I think it's the right thing to do," he said of his personal position in the referendum and he rejected suggestions he has become part of the Yes campaign.

"I have not joined any campaign," Pattison said. "I have been asked to get involved to oversee—if there is a Yes vote—that the funds go to where it's supposed to go."

He was approached "in the last few days" by Vancouver Mayor Gregor Robertson, who told reporters that mayors had been planning an oversight committee for a number of months.

Pattison won't be paid for his role—which Robertson described as independent—as chair of the public accountability committee for the transit and transportation plan.

He said he agreed to take on the role much



Evan Seal file photo

Jim Pattison will lead an oversight committee if the Yes side wins the transit referendum.

as he did when he was tapped 30 years ago to head Expo 86—the mayor phoned and asked him to do it.

"It's a community deal. I live here and the province and city have been very good to me. So I'm happy to do it if I can be helpful."

Other members of the committee are to be recruited by Pattison and approved by the mayors' council.

They're to work with the mayors, the province and TransLink to define a process for financial review and oversight of the estimated \$250 million a year that the sales tax hike would raise within Metro to fund a variety of transit and transportation projects over the next 10 years.

The committee will report directly to the public each year on whether the funds raised are spent on the defined project and in the priority set out in the plan.

No TransLink Tax campaign head Jordan Bateman predicts any audits will succeed only in uncovering waste after the fact, not preventing it, and said Pattison's committee will have no real power to force changes or penalize TransLink if funds are poorly spent.

He called it a desperate "Hail Mary pass" by mayors that won't work because the public doesn't trust TransLink.

Pattison is chairman and CEO of the Jim Pattison Group, Canada's second largest private company with 39,000 employees. Forbes has estimated his net worth at \$7.3 billion.

Students showcase science



Martin van den Hemel photo

Kio Mayede, a seventh grader from Homma Elementary, made homemade lava lamps by adding Alka Seltzer to oil and water. It was one of the many projects on display at Science Jam, held at Aberdeen Centre on Tuesday. See story and more photos on pages 6 and 7.

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Noel van den Hemel photos
Westwind Elementary Grade 6 students Josh Wessels and Thomas Dickinson along with seventh grader Kyle Matsunuma subtracted micro bugs from soils in a project titled "Hide n Seek".



Crystal Zhang, a sixth grader from Brighthouse Elementary, proposed the question, "If your eyesight is poor, can you smell better?" for her project titled Smell vs. Eyesight Combat.

Science Jam hits Aberdeen Centre

Does up-tempo music get your heart racing?

Do girls have better reflexes than boys?

These were among the questions posed by pint-sized scientists during the 12th annual Science Jam, held at Aberdeen Centre Tuesday afternoon.

More than 800 students from more than a dozen local elementary schools displayed their love for science at the non-competitive event organized by the Richmond School District.

Science Jam served as a showcase for the Grade 5 to Grade 7 students, who were encouraged to interact with shoppers and explain their hypothesis and how they conducted their experiments.

At Westwind Elementary, Grade 6 students Josh Wessels and Thomas Dickinson along with seventh grader Kyle Matsunuma subtracted micro bugs from soils in a project titled "Hide n Seek".

They used a homemade funnel to determine which soil had the most micro bugs and used soil dirt, sand and compost soil, predicting that sand would have the least bugs and dirt the most.

They discovered that sand did not have any micro bugs and the compost soil had the most due to the nutrition compost soil contained.

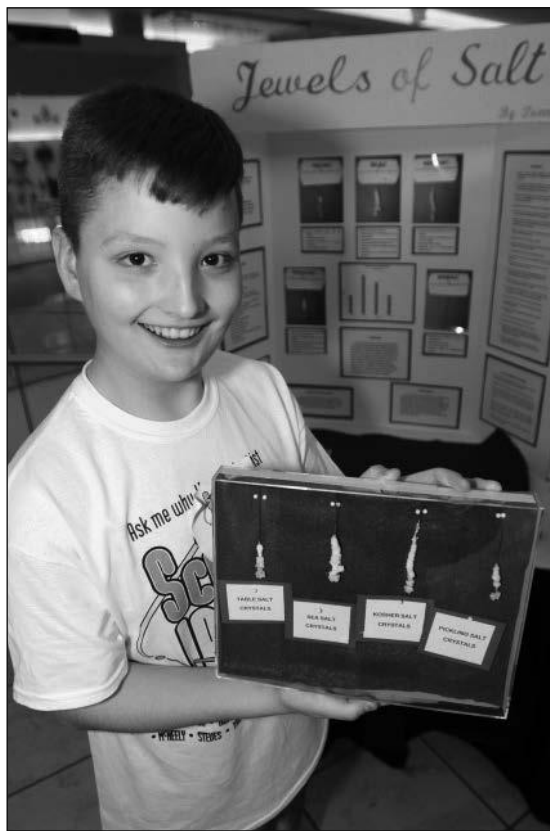
Grade 7 students Alex Guo, Quinton Qiu and Xiao Ning Ning from Brighthouse Elementary did an experiment called "Parachutes."

They wanted to determine if a parachute's material affected the speed it fell.

"A feather and a rock will drop at exactly the same rate pulled by earth's gravity," Guo explained. "The feather will fall more slowly because it catches air as it falls, which we call air resistance."

They discovered that the material opening from a parachute increased the air resistance and determined that the paper towel parachute they made was the best and fell the slowest.

Crystal Zhang, a sixth grader from Brighthouse Elementary, proposed the question, "If your eyesight is poor, can you smell better?" for her project titled "Smell vs. Eyesight Combat". She had her participants



Martin van den Hemel photo

Tanner March, a Grade 7 student from Brighthouse Elementary, grew salt crystals on strings using different types of sea salt.

wear blindfolds and smell several different lotions to match up the

scents. Zhang discovered that her hypothesis was incorrect because

she could not control the surrounding smell of the environment and the blindfold had its own scent as well.

From École des Navigateurs was Grade 7 student Jordan Chai, who asked, "Does the colour of the text or the paper affect the difficulty of memorizing a list of words?"

He wrote 50 words in green marker on a piece of yellow paper and used a group of eight people to memorize the list of words.

His participants then had to write down each word they remembered. Chai saw that in total, the participants memorized 38 words. He tried it again with red paper and a blue marker, and found that same group of participants memorized forty-two words.

Kio Mayede, a seventh grader from Homma Elementary, made homemade lava lamps by adding Alka Seltzer to oil and water.

"When you add the

alka seltzer, it produces bubbles that contain carbon dioxide. When the bubbles break up, they fall back down," says Kio, explaining the continuous rise and fall of the colored liquid inside lava lamps that had fascinated adults and kids alike.

Tanner March, also in Grade 7, from Brighthouse Elementary, grew salt crystals on strings using different types of sea salt.

"I basically made a saturated solution, moved the jars (containing the salts) into a warmer climate, and left them for seven days. The evaporation of the water allowed crystals to grow up the string."

Tanner came up with this idea as a way of recycling salt. He hopes to teach other kids to recycle through his project.

— by *Stephanie Chang Gillian Chan and Claire Zhao, Youth Reporters*