

Sheryl Roach

When I first heard that there would be a PPM for the Rapid Transit business case, I really didn't think it was warranted. But in seeing how this project has divided a city, I gave it a second thought.

I have done a lot of research on BRT and LRT. And when I say a lot, I can tell you that it has permeated my family life. I wouldn't say I am a transit nerd, but my kitchen table is covered in reports and scribbled notes. Where we once at dinner is now stacked with CUTA reports, business cases, magazine articles and anything else I could get my hands on. I've spoken with transit officials across this country, asking their opinions, experiences and outcomes for the choices they made. And I did this for two reasons. Number One: As the chair of the London Transit Commission, I wanted to be as knowledgeable on both sides of the issue as I could. Number Two: This is where I live.

We've heard many tangible arguments for and against. And I appreciate the passion I've seen. If only that passion could be applied to all of our city initiatives. But when all is said and done, our focus needs to be on moving people efficiently and cost-effectively. The city building comes second. I'm not saying it isn't important. It absolutely is. But to put all of our eggs into one development basket makes no sense to me.

This notion that BRT is second best or for second class citizens as I read in an open letter to the mayor today or for those stuck with taking the bus ordinarily is frankly, ridiculous. BRT is a premium service. A service that is successful in many major Canadian cities, including Calgary, Ottawa, York Region, Brampton, Halifax, Kelowna, Saskatoon and Waterloo. Many of whom are competitive, growing their populations at explosive rates all the while expanding their BRT services. How does this make it a second best idea for London?

Last week, I attended the CUTA Conference. I had the opportunity to sit and talk with many of the general managers and planners in the public transit industry. If you think for one second that this conflict over upgrading London's transit system hasn't reached their ears, you would be mistaken. And I can tell you, it was embarrassing. This has passed the point of a discussion and become a cause, something so do or die that people are willing to compromise their integrity and sacrifice the respect of their peers and for what I ask you? Because of what they *feel* we deserve over what we need and can utilize. This isn't about opinion. I don't much care about how you *feel* about BRT or LRT, I want to know what you think about the *facts*. Just as any level of government would when they look at this business case.

I'm tired. I'm tired of biting my tongue. I'm tired of being disappointed by people I once respected. I'm tired of seeing some of the brightest minds in transit being second-guessed by people who have become transit experts in the last month. I'm tired of London being made an example of how to squander an opportunity over infighting and egos. I'm tired of us forgetting

that this is about moving Londoners. I know that we are all aware that the Post 2019 Transit Requirements Study from Dillon will be completed in early June. It is my opinion that while it may change the master plan, it will have little bearing on the business case. So I'm asking you please, do not make any motions to defer decisions that could be made tonight. Let's put this plan forward and show as united a front as possible. The LTC FULLY endorsed this *business plan*. It's solid. Let's get it rolling.