

A Sad "Vision" of Billboards

by Stephen Elliott-Buckley - Friday, May 08, 2009

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Vision Vancouver is going to suffer from billboards for quite some time to come.

"The Olympics are prime time advertising and the city might be offering it to Vanoc at the regular market rate," the Richmond mayor said.

"But all of this has been discussed at closed meetings, so I really can't go into the details.

"The details will be released soon, perhaps within the month."

via [Mayor questions Vanoc ad deal](#).

We now have some new insight into the visual ad pollution of billboards in Vancouver, courtesy of Richmond's mayor Malcolm Brodie.

Not only has VANOC acquired access to all the billboard space in the Olympics universe for its official sponsors, the deals they've made for rates are part of closed municipal meetings.

This is no surprise since VANOC, much like a vampire, does nothing in broad daylight. Don't hold your breath on anything related to VANOC being released ever.

A couple months ago, Vision Vancouver cynically killed municipal plans to take down the billboard pollution around the city that contravenes rules about how far away from homes they are supposed to be. With 2 billboards within 60m of my living room window, I'm eager to see them gone--and their repulsive car and horror movie ads that have caused more than a few neighbourhood children turn away in fear.

But [as Charlie Smith featured weeks ago](#), Vision Vancouver voted to drift those plans into a bureaucratic purgatory.

Smith noted how Vision's Geoff Meggs is connected to Glen Clark who is connected to Jim Pattison whose name is on many of the polluting billboards. Connecting the dots allows us to see a rather transparent motive and example of what Vision Vancouver's vision actually is.

But Richmond's Mayor Brodie has now also reminded us that these are not ordinary times. The Olympics gold rush means we CANNOT risk taking down even one billboard, despite how heinously it may contravene municipal by-laws.

We see the VANOC vision again appearing as our masters.

This is very bad news for Vision Vancouver. As a new party, with little stable ideological roots and now

only months of governing history, its identity is still in the fetal stage.

Its membership swelled with the Obama bump. It had dozens of prospective candidates vying for nominations, many of whom were very progressive, but some were temporarily out of the NPA.

They've had policy meetings, but those mean little until they get a chance to actually enact policy through governing. And now we're seeing what they are like: Jimmy Pattison, billboards, VANOC.

And like many new political parties or movements, their membership will dip when renewal time comes. But for Vision, their membership will plunge as people realize that the amorphous hint of progressiveness they robed themselves in ends up lacking anything solid.

A political party walks its walk. If it talks a different line, people who pay attention to the walk will see the gap and act accordingly.

Real progressives currently in Vision will have to make a decision very soon about whether their vision of Vision is shared by the ones in charge. If not, they'll have to move on.