

Bus company hit by gov't competition

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Improved bus service for Fraser Valley passengers means layoffs for a Sardis coach company.

Cascade Coach Lines has been busing people into Vancouver since 1984.

But when Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows joined the Vancouver Regional Transit System last Dec. 16, it meant a three-zone transit fare of \$2.75, compared with Cascade's \$4.05 fare.

"We've fought the traffic, the construction, the weather, and now we're faced with fighting the government," says Cascade president Robert Dubois. "It's unfair of the B.C. government to move in and steal what we've built up."

Cascade lost 3,500 passengers over the previous December because of the subsidized govern-

ment competition. The company has had to lay off eight people, Dubois said.

He wants the government to either subsidize him, too, or buy back his valley runs.

Cascade operated for 16 years until 1984 as a charter service and parcel express. After acquiring the Fraser Valley routes, Dubois expanded to 25 buses from five, and to 40 employees from four.

Ron Wickstrom, a spokesman for Glen Clark, the minister responsible for BC Transit, said: "We'll have a look at it and see if there's something we can do for the guy."

BC Transit began the valley service in response to requests from the municipalities, said BC Transit spokesman Scott MacFarlane.

BC Transit estimates as many as 700 people have switched from their cars to the bus since the service was introduced.