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# Tom Hughes

## METRO COUNCIL PRESIDENT--ELECTED REGIONWIDE

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December 19, 2013 3:45 PM

### Tom Hughes statement in response to referendum announcement

With dismay, we learned today that a small but vocal minority of opponents plan to file paperwork to force a citizen referendum on a recent tax code amendment passed by the Multnomah County Board of Commissioners.

Contained within the details of the code amendment were important updates to the public/private partnership that funds successful tourism promotion efforts that make our city a dynamic and much revered convention and travel destination.

A key section of the code allows future visitors staying at the proposed Oregon Convention Center hotel to pay taxes to fund its construction.

For more than a decade, Metro, Multnomah County and the City of Portland have worked collaboratively with Travel Portland, hoteliers, restaurant owners, transportation vendors and tourism operators to build one of the world's best destination marketing strategies. Its resounding success is demonstrated by the breadth of glowing international media coverage advertising the reasons to visit Portland and beyond. One can also look at the occupancy and room rates of our downtown hotels to confirm our success: Through October of this year, the year-to-date averages are 76.5% for occupancy rates and \$121.88 for average daily room rates.

To destroy the long-standing agreement that benefits all parties and enjoys broad support from individuals and organizations far beyond the tourism and hospitality industries is simply short-sighted and selfish.

The truth is, the hotel owners who oppose the idea of a convention center hotel do so despite its promise to create economic prosperity for construction workers and hotel employees, members of the minority and historically underserved communities and the neighborhoods of North and Northeast Portland.

The hotel project is a jobs initiative. Consider the 2,000 union construction jobs that will be created. Through numerous public hearings and meetings, we heard enthusiastic support from dozens of local carpenters, electricians, utility and trades people who spoke eloquently about the importance of good paying jobs and training opportunities for themselves and their families.



















We also heard from many hotel and restaurant employees. They expressed optimism and hope when imagining the 950 permanent jobs related to the proposed hotel, more than half of which will be created at the hotel and will pay a decent wage and with good working conditions, thanks to the commitment of our partners at the Hyatt Hotel Corporation.

Beyond the project itself, many local jobs will be created and sustained by the new convention business that will come to town because of the hotel. With the addition of 5 to 10 new national conventions meeting in Portland each year, the local economy will experience an infusion of



Elected regionwide, Metro Council President Tom Hughes was sworn into office Jan. 4, 2011.

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\$120 million more each year in tourist spending.

It is disheartening that a small but well-funded group is set on unraveling the great work of so many in our community. I urge you to join us in the fight to create good jobs now and into the future with the convention center hotel project.

- *Tom Hughes*

[Learn more about the hotel project](#)

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