

Subject: Public input to Council

Date: Thu, 10 Jan 2002 03:25:13 +0000 (GMT)

From: Elizabeth James <cagebc@yahoo.com>

To: Mayor and Council <council@district.north-van.bc.ca>

Mayor Don Bell & Members of Council,
DISTRICT OF NORTH VANCOUVER,
Box 86218,
NORTH VANCOUVER, B.C.
V7L 4K1

January 9, 2002

Re: Public Input to Council

Dear Mayor Bell and Members of Council:

Recent suggestions by members of Council that the thirty minutes of public input - which taxpayers of the District have appreciated and participated in for many years - be modified or eliminated have been noted, and we would like to register our strong opposition to such a move.

One suggestion has been to move the input session to the end of the meeting. Anyone paying attention to Council meetings over the past couple of terms will note that most meetings have gone up to and beyond time allotted, thus 'booting' items for discussion into the following week's agenda.

On many occasions, this has enabled Mayor and/or Council to manipulate agendas and/or delay discussion of contentious issues - especially useful when such an item can then escape the 'live' attention of Shaw Cable viewers. Whether or not the result is intended is unclear, but to a regular viewer it certainly appears to happen too often to be merely 'happenstance'.

Not all of the input, though timely for one reason or another to the presenter, will address an item on that date's agenda, but it has often been the case that such information, provided in advance, has proven useful to the development of staff reports, and/or Council decisions.

To delay public input until the full agenda has been covered would be an imposition on Council's taxpayer employers, many of whom might need to be up at the crack of dawn to go to work. It benefits a citizen not at all if, learning of a problem, the only recourse is to write belated letters to Council or to the media; such is akin to closing the barn door..... May we respectfully suggest that it would also constitute a total disregard for the convenience of District taxpayers - or of those others who may have traveled some distance to speak to an issue which they feel will be of concern to those taxpayers.

Another strategy which appears to be under consideration by Council, is to eliminate public input, period. That, too, does not fly. Not only would Council lose out on the expertise of many thoughtful individuals in the community, but it also serves to insult.

In this, an election year, members of Council would do well to remember that, at election time, they not only offer themselves forward to *serve* the community but, in effect, they are applying to their citizen employers for a salaried position. As such, it would behoove them to remember that they must remain accountable to that employer for their actions, not just once every three years at election time, but from day to day. To deny an employer the right to offer input to, or comment on the process is not only, as stated above, an insult but it

is overbearing in the extreme.

In scarcely bears repeating that these are days of *extremely* scarce taxpayer dollars and of rapidly escalating costs. It is imperative, therefore, that Council have the responsibilities with which they are charged under the Local Government Act front and centre at all times. Specifically, the phrases ***Stewardship of Public Assets*** and ***....fostering the current and future economic, social and environmental well-being of its community***, come to mind. In this writer's opinion, though a few members of Council, to one degree or another, strive to fulfil this mandate, overall and as a body with staff, this Council falls far short of the ideal - thus continuing a regrettably noticeable downward trend over the past few terms. That opinion has been borne out by both national and KPMG reports on District performance. The citizens of the District deserve better and, moreover, they pay for better.

No decision that Council makes, nor action it takes will reach full potential if it does not have the full and enthusiastic support of the community. If members of Council, and the staff they are tasked to direct, will not recognize that they are only a small, albeit important, part of what should be a community team, there will be no vision and the effort mediocre at best.

Last but not least, taxpayers in all part of this province demonstrated quite clearly last May that they've had it with those among them who seem to feel that, once elected, "...government can do anything it wants". It can happen again.

Sincerely,

Liz James

Do You Yahoo!?

Get personalised at [My Yahoo!](#).