

**Subject:****Date:** Sun, 5 May 2002 11:05:02 -0700**From:** Ernie Crist <CristE@dnv.org>**To:** "FONVCA (E-mail)" <fonvca@fonvca.org>

## A MESSAGE FROM ERNIE CRIST:

The matter of the public's right to access information will be on the Council Agenda this coming Monday May 6, 2002.

This right has long been challenged by some of the CCA endorsed District Councillors. Subsequently one of their chieftains made a motion claiming that repetitious requests were demoralizing for staff and cost a great deal of money. But since denying such legitimate requests is politically too risky, the CCA endorsed Council has now camouflaged its objective of discouraging such legitimate requests under the guise of excessive and unreasonable demands.

What is unreasonable? A case in point could be when a citizen, more than one in fact, asked in a perfectly polite and businesslike fashion for information on the total cost of the Land Fill closure. When the information was not forthcoming or when it was incomplete or out and out misleading and subsequently the request was repeated, it was termed "repetitious" and "unreasonable".

What is true for the landfill is also true for many other requests. The bureaucratic tactic used is simple. First you ignore such requests, especially by community activists, and/or provide misleading or incomplete information and when the request is subsequently repeated, you brand the request as being unreasonable. The tyranny of the bureaucracy comes in a thousand masks. Ultimately it is the District bureaucracy who will decide whether your request is reasonable and/or repetitious.

In theory, at least under the new proposal before Council this coming Monday, any request termed by a bureaucrat as being unreasonable will go to the Municipal Manager first. If he cannot determine whether it is reasonable or not, the request will go before Council for a final decision. This is the same CCA endorsed Council who determined that such requests could be demoralizing, time consuming and expensive in the first place. The process could take months if not years and will certainly put a damper on anyone who wants information which, of course, is the whole idea in the first place.

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