

**Subject: FW: Access to Information**

**Date:** Sun, 5 May 2002 21:52:21 -0700

**From:** Ernie Crist <CristE@dnv.org>

**To:** "'fonvca@fonvca.org'" <fonvca@fonvca.org>, "'kost@triumf.ca'" <kost@triumf.ca>

-----Original Message-----

**From:** Ernie Crist

**Sent:** Sunday, May 05, 2002 8:52 PM

**To:** 'Elizabeth James'; Ernie Crist; FONVCA (E-mail)

**Subject:** RE: Access to Information

Dear Ms James:

On the Landfill I was referring to myself rather than to you. Of course I can understand your frustrations. However, I believe that in all fairness some people and certainly Fonvca have already made a big difference in the District. More will come. In any case what are the alternatives? To give up and let "them" do what "they" please? Allow "them" to get away with "murder"? Ride roughshod over the public? No questions asked? Give in? Is this not exactly what "they" want? Is this not the whole purpose of "their" efforts? i.e. to discourage and instead of asking critical questions turn the citizens into "nice and obedient" subjects? Is this not why we ended up with the mess in B.C.? Why Canada dropped from number one to number 18 in the world? Is this not why we ended up with 'NO HERITAGE FUND' ? Why the public is discouraged from accessing the waterfront which belongs to them etc.? Over my dead body and I hope over yours too.

Sincerely Yours,

Ernie Crist

-----Original Message-----

**From:** Elizabeth James [mailto:cagebc@yahoo.com]

**Sent:** Sunday, May 05, 2002 1:30 PM

**To:** Ernie Crist; FONVCA (E-mail)

**Subject:** Re: Access to Information

Dear Clr. Crist:

I trust that you are not referring to my requests for landfill information, for if you are then I must say that - openly at least - that was not a response that I received.

What did happen with my landfill requests was that, initially, I had some difficulty in eliciting the complete information via an informal request to Mr. Carlson. It took a formal request through FOI to get what appears to be straightforward - though likely still incomplete - numbers.

Had I gone further, viz. had I insisted on receiving a breakdown as to what was actually spent on "landfill closure" as opposed to those amounts spent on allied or completely separate projects, then, perhaps, I would have received an accusation of 'harrassment'. However, that was not done, for two reasons: Firstly, it was not until sometime later that in a phone call to you, I discovered that you had pressed Staff for an answer to the effect that not all monies requisitioned for "closure" had been spent on on "closure", and secondly, it was due to pressures on my own time.

Lastly, I am beginning to think that one of the best things Council and Staff could do is shut down the access to District information. Why? Because it appears that nothing less will get the District population up in arms to the extent required to force accountability at the level of local government.....and even that is debatable!

Sincerely,

Liz James,

Chair  
*Coalition for Accountability in Government Enterprises*  
Box 16090, 3017 Mountain Highway,  
NORTH VANCOUVER, B.C.  
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[604] 988-0456

*Ernie Crist* <*CristE@dnv.org*> wrote:

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 determined 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.

> ATTACHMENT part 2 application/ms-tnef

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