

**Subject: Letter to the voters**

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England does not have a written constitution, but democracy is in the very bones of every Brit. It is part of an Englishman's breakfast, pub and soccer. However, not so in the North Vancouver District Council Chambers it seems. To deny a member of an English Town Council the right to introduce and explain a motion to his Town Council and in the presence of his voters unless he gets permission from a member of the opposition first is as unthinkable as electing the Fascist Mosley (now dead) Prime Minister of England.

The New District Council was put to the test on their very first meeting one week after inauguration. I made a motion that any Councillor may introduce a prior submitted motion and, once it goes on the agenda, explain its purpose BEFORE the chair calls for a seconder for debate. This procedure was in place prior to the 1999 election and was changed when the previous CCA endorsed Council elected every Council seat except mine.

Having declined to sign up on the CCA plank of closing the gate to public access of the waterfront is the crime I had committed. I was severely punished for it but, incorrigible as I am, I refused to repent.

It has always been my contention and it still is that, regardless of party politics, certain democratic rights are untouchable. But when I recently asked the new Council to restore this fundamental right, my motion was defeated. I heard more alibis when the item came up for debate than I heard crows yelling on my neighbor's tree during their annual mating get together in February.

It would unduly prolong the Council Meeting, stated one Councilor - the author of such motions might submit an unlimited number of motions - the motions might be frivolous, opined yet another and on and on it went. It was like a replay of the arguments the Czar of Russia used when his subjects demanded a semblance of parliamentary rights in his rotten empire.

The issue is one of principle, of course. Any elected representative should have such a right. In the District the situation is even more critical. In this last election 5 out of the 7 members of District Council were endorsed by a civic party the "Citizens for Responsible Government". Like it or not, there is now a civic party system in the District Hall with a majority and a minority.

During the recent election, individual members of Council presented the voters with a list of promises. I presented a 12 point program which I fully intend to bring forward for consideration. But I can only do that in the form of motions. To accomplish this I must have the right to explain them BEFORE the Mayor calls for a seconder for further debate. If I am not allowed to do so then how can I convince Council to support my efforts, not to speak of public support? Needless to say once a motion has been explained, if there is no seconder, the motion is dead. This is only fair and democratic.

There are other reasons why bringing points to Council's attention are important.


In the District requests from individuals or organizations for specific actions are not dealt with as part of a regular Council Agenda as they are in most other municipalities. When I suggested that we do so, District staff raised objections and Council acquiesced. Subsequently in the District such requests can only be followed through if a member of Council puts them forward in the form of a motion. It falls under the category of due diligence and leadership though some Councillors have never bothered and still get elected. There is also the question of motions for the FCM and/or the UBCM. Unless a Councillor takes the trouble to present a motion, nothing gets done. These forums are important to promote the interest of municipalities during annual conventions.

The District is in the middle of a financial crisis. As a Councillor with 22 years of service behind me, I feel I have a special responsibility to the voters. To introduce and explain a motion within a 2 minute time limit, trying to come to grips with relevant issues, will hardly detract from the caliber of a Council meeting. On the contrary, it can only add to it. It is called leadership. Any attempt to abuse such a set up should quickly be denounced by the public and the media. Indeed the mere suggestion is absurd. It raises the specter of political immaturity if not contempt for the intelligence of the

voting public.

Not a single member of this new Council seemed to grasp this idea, however, not even those who finally voted in favor of the motion. The right to explain an initiative BEFORE the Chair calls for a seconder is called democracy - it is a right not a privilege to be bestowed by another politician.

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