

Subject: Mr. Fleming's appearance before Council to speak against Councillor Crist's motion to reorganize

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A MESSAGE FROM ERNIE CRIST

Mr Sandy Fleming from the North Vancouver Recreation Commission came before District Council urging Council not to support Councillor Crist's motion calling for a reorganization of the Commission.

"We just did a study," Mr Fleming said. "It cost us \$ 62,000 and to do another would be folly and a complete waste of money and staff time," he said. However, Mr. Fleming was far too modest. The Commission has done not just one but several studies costing tens of thousands of taxpayer dollars each. The need to do the same exercise repeatedly was because they were all fatally flawed. Hardly a wonder since it was the Commission itself which supplied the background information to the consultants.

One of these expensive studies insisted that the Centennial Theater was under the jurisdiction of the North Vancouver Arts Commission when, in fact, it is under the jurisdiction of the Rec. Commission itself. One would think that the Commission knows what it is in charge of and what not. Another priceless statement was that the replacement value of a District facility was \$ 3 million when its replacement cost is ten times this amount.

In the same report, the replacement value of a facility in the City however was given at its true replacement value. It brought the value of District facilities down and those of the City up. It just so happens that one of the main objectives of the Commission leadership has and continues to be proving that the Joint City and District Recreation Services are balanced and to everybody's advantage rather than the sieve through which the District bleeds. By way of example, the District supplies 75% of the playing fields for which the City users pay nothing.

The same is true for capital maintenance of District Rec facilities. While the District has 3 major Recreation Facilities for every one in the City, the City contributes not a penny for their capital maintenance. It stands to reason, therefore, that the Commission was not interested in providing accurate data to the consultants but rather to convince District taxpayers that, under the umbrella of the Rec Commission, the District is doing well. We do not care how much the District taxpayers subsidize the City as long as the status quo is maintained and we are in control would be the appropriate Commission motto.

But there is more - Mr Fleming was weeping tears over a new "study" when nobody in fact had called for such a new "study" in the first place. Not even a word to that effect was mentioned in my motion. It was a pure figment of Mr. Fleming's imagination - his own strawman in fact. My motion merely called for a staff report - that is all. Now there is a big difference between a costly study, especially those the Commission has financed in the past, and a staff report as called for in my motion. A study is a "book" paid to a consultant, a staff report is 2 or 3 pages and is done by in-house staff which, in any case, I had already completed as part of my motion.

Shamelessly, however Mr Fleming continued beating down his own invention. This hilarious scenario in turn opened the door for the other District Councillors who apparently were equally ill informed. One by one they joined in parroting Mr Fleming. One insisted that if the District would pull out of the present arrangement with the city and reorganize public recreation based on the successful Parkgate model "fees would go through the roof". That it would be the exact opposite never occurred to this loyal to the Commission Councillor.


Another one did agree that the District facilities, for lack of capital maintenance, despite a District subsidy of close to \$ 6 million annually, are indeed rapidly deteriorating. The fault, she explained, lies with the District for not providing enough

funding for capital maintenance. That was a brilliant deduction especially in light that addressing this issue was at the heart of my motion. It is indeed the reason why the Commission needs to be reorganized without saddling the District with additional huge cost. All this escaped their intellect, however, or did it?

The Commission knows how to reward its "friends" i.e. those who put the interests of the Commission first. Despite an abundance of playing fields in the District, more were built at the Commission's behest to meet the shortage in the City. It is also a fact that members of District Council sitting on the Commission are receiving both for themselves and members of their families free annual passes - a Gift in fact which, as a Court in Ontario declared, puts them in a conflict of interest situation.

In the meantime the price of relentless mediocrity and lack of leadership is taking its toll on the facilities. The outcome will be predictable.

Ernie Crist

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