

Subject: The Arts and the District Council

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A MESSAGE FROM ERNIE CRIST;

If you watched the recent District Council meeting on the ARTS you will understand why ART on the North Shore is still in the crawling mode when it should be in the jogging mode.

The meeting was somewhat less than successful, noted the press. At issue was a proposed core funding policy for the ARTS for not for profit cultural delivery services that manage, operate and program municipal cultural facilities in the District. The specific staff proposal called for an increase in operational core funding from \$ 2 per capita to \$2.35. It also called for a time commitment so that arts organization may better plan and for longer periods.

Although this was a District meeting and District money, the administration organizations who deliver Art services on the North Shore (excluding West Van) serve not only the District but also the City. During the question period, I asked a representative of the ARTS Community whether, in his opinion, the 3 way split in funding for Arts administration was a duplication and subsequently inefficient. The District Councillor, who chaired the meeting, ruled the question out of order as being "political in nature".

The question I had asked referred to the Arts Commission, the Arts Council and the Recreation Commission, each of which, either directly or indirectly receive funding for the ARTS and each of which maintains their own bureaucracy. The Recreation Commission, whose job it is to look after public recreation, also administers the Centennial Theater. This is the same as the ARTS Commission administrating the William Griffin Swimming pool.

One District Councillor stated that she was confused. I believe that at the heart of this "confusion" is really ART ignorance. The ARTS on the North Shore are still treated as the municipal "Cinderella". Direct municipal support is meager.

There still exists an absurd notion on the part of most District politicians that the ARTS are a sideshow. In reality promotion of the ARTS spells the difference between existing and living. The ARTS play a crucial part in the livable community concept. In terms of economic benefits, the ARTS is in a league of its own.

To provide leadership, several points need to be addressed.

Municipal contribution to the ARTS must be increased. Even with the proposed increase in funding the amount is not much more than the cost of a cup of coffee. By way of example, the per capita subsidy for public recreation, including capital maintenance is close to \$ 60.00 per annum. Both are equally important community health, social and cultural support pillars. In terms of economic benefits, the ARTS is in a league of its own.

District politicians should guard that the confessed "confusion" of a Councillor will not become an excuse to retreat or cut support for the ARTS.

There should be one ART administration body. The body politics must address this issue in a strategic fashion. In the meantime this issue must not become the excuse to diminish support for the ARTS. The question of administrative streamlining must be resolved by moving forward.

The Arts community itself must become more active. At present and in typical fashion, it is not only politically weak but also politically meek.

Support for the Arts is the key to the all round social, economic and spiritual health and well-being of a community. Countries which spend hundreds of dollars per capita for the ARTS are not governed by fools. It is no accident that they are also the ones with

the highest standard of living. The crime rate especially among youth in countries where support for the ARTS is high is far lower than where such support is marginal. At first blush, this may sound incredible but a closer look will convince even skeptics that this is so.

How will we know that we are successful? It will be when the number of tourists coming to the North Shore, now a million a year will increase tenfold. It will be when those tourists will not just get off the buses after arriving and take a picture, have a cup of coffee and leave, but stay to take in exciting events and sights. It will be when our business community prospers and our restaurants are full. It is when people, of their own volition, will maintain not only their houses but also the boulevards in front of the homes out of sheer pride.

It is when tourists will stay to visit museums, exhibitions, attend concerts and partake in other activities as is the case in Calgary, Bayreuth, Salzburg, Ober-Ammergau, Stratford, Ontario, Victoria, BC, and Quebec City, to mention but a few places. It is when our Youth Crime will drop significantly as a result and when the community spirit will surpass anything we can even conceive at present.

If the North Shore, with its stunning background, is not the place to accomplish this then there is no place period. All we need is the understanding that this is possible. What we need is a revolution in thinking - a cultural revolution to give District Council a jolt.

Some time ago we had an offer from a world renowned Chorus from Austria to come and give a benefit concert on the North Shore with no strings attached. The idea was to have a joint concert at the Centennial with either a North Shore based Choir or the Bach Choir from Vancouver. I asked the District Council to endorse this effort.

This was necessary for our anticipated visitors to receive the necessary support from their own government in turn. Such performances are financed by the Austrian Ministry of Culture and Tourism. But the District Council turned it down. Not only did the people of the North Shore lose an opportunity to hear a world caliber chorus but we also lost thousands of dollars for North Shore charities who would have received the proceeds.

I do not believe that this attitude will lead to success. There is no substitute for leadership - ARTS AND CULTURE are no exception. Since the Council debate on this issue was not resolved, the item will come back. We will see whether anybody has learned anything in the meantime.

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