

Subject: COUNCILLOR CRIST'S MOTION RE "CONFLICT OF INTEREST" FREE ANNUAL RECREATION COMMISSION PASSES FOR ELECTED OFFICIALS.

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A MESSAGE FROM ERNIE CRIST

I recently submitted a motion on District Council regarding free annual passes which the North Vancouver Recreation Commission extends to elected officials who serve on the Commission as appointed members of Council. The point of my motion was to seek a legal opinion as to whether members of Council, who have accepted such free passes for themselves and/or members of their families, are in a conflict of interest situation and should subsequently excuse themselves when Recreation Commission matters come before Council and/or whether they should forfeit the offer to receive free passes from the Commission.

The conflict of interest guidelines clearly state that no member of Council may accept any gift from any organization, corporation or individual but if they do, they must declare their conflict and excuse themselves when an item pertaining to such an organization or individual comes before Council. In the course of this debate, I informed Council that when I first got elected more than twenty years ago and when I served on the Commission I had myself accepted such a free pass.

I also stated that I soon realized the pitfalls for doing so and I stopped. Indeed as I served on the Commission for 6 years, I was entitled to a lifetime free pass from the Commission but I declined this as well. I have since been a fully paid up regular user of the Rec facilities. I am simply stating this to clarify the record.


However, it was during the debate on seeking a legal opinion, that Councillor Harris made a big point that I had also accepted a free pass from the Commission in the past. This comment had, of course, nothing to do with the motion before Council and was clearly geared to detract from the issue on hand. However it was typical of this Councillor who is famous for her hostility towards me.

The reasons for this go back many years when Ms Harris was first elected. As a result of family political connections she encountered serious difficulties in being endorsed by the Save Lynn Canyon Park Committee. Being endorsed by this Committee was crucial in her election bid.

Janice Harris, whom I hardly knew, called me and complained and in tears about this discrimination and asked for my help. I agreed and got in touch with the executive of the Save Lynn Canyon Park Committee. I informed them that I considered this discrimination against Ms Harris to be an unacceptable case of witch hunting and red baiting. The Chair of the Committee agreed and Ms Harris who claimed to be an environmentalist was subsequently endorsed by the Save Lynn Canyon Park Committee and was elected to Council.

However, since that day Ms Harris has displayed a near pathological hostility towards me. Whether this is a question of twisted guilt, embarrassment that she had to come to me for help, jealousy or simply ignorance or a combination of all of the above is difficult to say. It does constitute, however, an interesting psychological, albeit curious, study of human behavior. I rest my case.

Ernie Crist

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