

Subject: FW: Response to letter dated Feb. 10,2004 from Ms Debolt, Chair Board of School Trustees re School closure and District Council resolution Feb 2,2004.

Date: Mon, 23 Feb 2004 09:36:29 -0800

From: "Ernie Crist" <ernie_crist@dnv.org>

To: "FONVCA (E-mail)" <fonvca@fonvca.org>

> -----Original Message-----

> From: Ernie Crist

> Sent: February 23, 2004 9:35 AM

> To: Nathalie Valdes

> Subject: Response to letter dated Feb. 10,2004 from Ms Debolt, Chair Board of School Trustees re School closure and District Council resolution Feb 2,2004.

>

> Dear Ms Debolt:

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> My apologies for not being able to attend the School Board presentation on Oct. 23,2003 when you discussed the Community Forum for Nov 8,2003. Neither was I able to attend the Nov 8, 2003 forum itself. However, I understand from your letter that the forum was attended by 240 concerned persons and that you felt it was successful. Clearly however, you are still confronted with the ugly fact of having to face closure of some schools in our District.

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> I believe you are aware that, for many years I have advocated that the provincial government open schools for childcare use and make childcare in British Columbia part of our universal education. This means that childcare would be an integral part of the education system. In my opinion this step with one stroke would put a whole different complexion on the question. It would also resolve another anomaly. People in residential neighborhoods are objecting to the expansion of childcare spaces by private operators. This is not because they are against children but because they are against increased traffic and noise which is the inevitable byproduct whenever you have a large number of children however well behaved and supervised they may be. Only the other day, Council approved an application by a private operator for an extended childcare facility from 10 to 20 children in a residential neighborhood despite objections from the adjoining neighbors. As you know the District, via zoning regulations, controls the number of children allowed in private facilities.

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> In short there is a desperate shortage of childcare space while schools, including our District, are under utilized. I find it very difficult to understand this anomaly especially since in all developed countries, except possibly the US, universal childcare has been part of the education system since WW I. This was a long time ago. The situation reminds me somewhat of the depression during the thirties when among mountains of rotting food, people were starving. We are truly backward.

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> I have made numerous attempts on District Council to pressure the provincial government to address this matter via resolutions to the UBCM, and the GVRD but with little success. District Councils, both past and present, provided little or no leadership or help. Indeed, in most cases, they did not even accept my motions to that effect. As a result, despite repeated efforts, little ever came of it.

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> Letters and copies of my motions sent to the school board were never acknowledged either. The purpose of my comments is not to criticize but to suggest a combined effort by all levels of local government to resolve the problem. The same is true for the joint use of schools. When I recently enquired on the status of this issue senior staff at the school board were not even aware that such an agreement between the District of North Vancouver and the school board exists never mind having done anything about it. However, I believe this area too has the potential to change the picture. In any case I believe that these issues, are on the agenda and is an idea whose time has come.

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> I suggest an emergency meeting of all political bodies on the North Shore for the purpose of sending a strong and urgent message to the Premier and the Minister of education to hold off closing of the schools including to allow schools to be used for childcare use. I also suggest that the school board clarify and revisit the issue of the joint use of schools under the existing agreement between the District of North Vancouver

and the School Board for after hour use of schools. >

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> If I can be of assistance I will be more than happy to do so in any way I can. I certainly agree with you that this is a most serious issue. The tragedy is that there is absolutely no need for this other than our own lack of imagination or lack of leadership on the part of all levels of government. We can certainly change this situation and rather quickly I would hope.

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> Yours truly,

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> Ernie Crist

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