

**Subject: What is the real reason for upgrading the road to Grouse Mountain - who benefits and who pays.**

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**From:** "Ernie Crist" <ernie\_crist@dnv.org>

**To:** <fonvca@fonvca.org>

**CC:** "Mayor and Council - DNV" <Council@dnv.org>, "Senior Management Committee" <managecomm@dnv.org>, "James Ridge" <James\_Ridge@dnv.org>

A MESSAGE FROM ERNIE CRIST

In 1984, the then District of North Vancouver's Director of Engineering Services, John Bremner, a man of impeccable professional and personal attributes, stated that the far flung District infrastructure had an approximate life span of 50 years. And, said John, 35 years of those 50 years are up". "In 15 years", he said, "we will be faced with huge expenditures amounting of up to hundreds of millions of dollars. I suggest", said John, "that we set up a special fund and add each year to it so we won't have to hit residents with huge tax increases when the time comes". It made sense to me. II not only voted in favour but periodically enquired how the Fund was doing.


In 1997 it had grown to \$91 million dollars which was a substantial amount. This translated into \$1,100 per capita. Other municipalities in the Lower Mainland had similar funds. I found that the City of North Vancouver's Fund was \$1,300 per capita and West Vancouver's, \$ 1,700, the highest in the Lower Mainland. The lowest in the region I believe was either in Coquitlam or Port Coquitlam which had only \$ 400 per capita.

However, under Don Bell and his CCA endorsed Council, the Fund, unbeknown to me, was used to pay for other expenditures. All legal, of course. Just as using the Heritage Fund to cover operating expenses was legal. However, Council was never told officially that it had been accessed to the point where there was nothing left. Other than bafflegab and gobbledegook, I never received a satisfactory reply to my questions. People will be surprised to hear this, but, if they knew how the District operated under Don Bell, they would most definitely not be surprised. For someone like me to challenge any policy, I needed to make a motion. To have the motion debated, it needed to be seconded by one of the CCA endorsed members of Council. They in turn stuck to each other like a bunch of grapes to the vine. They even complained that I made too many motions and gave Staff too much work to do. Janice Harris was particularly vocal.

The issue is of interest since at the Sept 12,2005 meeting, in connection with the upgrading of a road on Mount Fromme, I asked staff point blank how much money, if any, was still in the Infrastructure Reserve Fund. Why would Staff, I thought, ask that the cost for the \$26,000 study, come from a small contingency fund rather than from the Infrastructure Reserve Fund, which is what one would expect. The answer I got was inconclusive and varied from giggles and embarrassed smiles to half baked answers and an interruption from Councillor Lisa Muri, also a CCA endorsed member of Council, who claimed there never was such a Fund.

I strongly suspect that the study on upgrading the road on Mount Fromme and hence to Grouse Mountain is the opening salvo to a parking lot to accommodate Mountain Bikers. It will also be a nice gesture by the District to Grouse Mountain Resorts who needs the road for its heavy trucks. The question is who will pay for it?

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