

Subject:**Date:** Wed, 13 Mar 2002 17:26:52 -0800**From:** Ernie Crist <CristE@dnv.org>**To:** "FONVCA (E-mail)" <fonvca@fonvca.org>

A MESSAGE FROM ERNIE CRIST

On Monday Dec. 3 - 2001 Councillor Denault at a special (closed) meeting of Council requested that Staff provide a report on the quantity and nature of requests for detailed information from the members of the public, including the associated time and cost of staff responding to these requests, the affect on workplace morale and environment, and a review of existing policy relating to this matter.

The motion was not listed on the agenda and was added by vote of Council to the agenda with Councillor Crist voting against. I voted against the motion for not only was it not listed on the agenda but also because the item under discussion did in my opinion not qualify to be debated at a closed meeting under the relevant sections of the Local Government Act. My concerns were dismissed.

As for the motion itself - we now have the report by the Municipal Manager Gord Howie. The recommendation of Mr. Howie is that this report be considered at a Regular Council meeting. I concur with that recommendation and I look forward to a debate on this very important issue.

As of this moment, I still consider the motion to be an attempt to curtail the public's right for information and the right to open government which is important in all cases but appears to be of Himalayan size importance in the District of North Vancouver. I also note that the total cost to the District to accommodate those requests in 2001 including staff time was \$24,733. That is a small amount considering the importance of this matter. As I make that statement I am cognizant of the increasing regularity in which requests for information on my part are being ignored. I am still, for example, waiting for an answer to a legitimate (and polite) request I made last year.

In the report the Manager makes a great fuss about that the \$ 24, 733. does not include the additional staff benefits amounting to 20 - 40 % of the salaries.

I will reserve any further comment except to say that in light of the fiscal "misunderstandings" that have come to light recently, the amount of money spent is infinitesimal and is but a small price to pay to access information on public matters.

As for the concern expressed in the rational of the motion about the possible effects on staff morale, I believe that such a concern is unfounded. Indeed, I believe the effect on morale to be most excellent for what could be more excellent for staff morale then to know that the community cares about the state of their local government.

Ernie Crist

 [Part 1.2](#)

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