

**Subject: Gateway BC - North Planning Group "Boondoggle" or Alice in Wonder land and the IOC**

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A MESSAGE FROM ERNIE CRIST

March 4, 2002

The recent decision by District Council to set up a "Gateway BC - North Planning Group" (read a District of North Vancouver Olympic Committee) for a possible successful 2010 Olympic bid at Whistler has all the ingredients of another boondoggle. It is a decision beautifully tailored for the bureaucracy as there will be little or no control over the bureaucracy by the elected bodies. They can now gallivant around the planet, have meetings, hire even more staff, write reports, push paper around and otherwise get out of the job they are supposed to be doing.

The North Vancouver Rec Commission, whose job it is to keep the people of this community fit and keep them out of doctors' offices, can now stick its nose into all kinds of ventures and spend money when they don't have enough to fix the leaky roofs in their facilities. They are very good at this extra curricular game already, making themselves busy in all kinds of areas including in the Arts field even though we already have an Arts Commission. The Rec Commission even hired a person to hang paintings on the walls of our Rec facilities, notwithstanding that the Arts Commission already has a person supposed to do that job. You may remember that all this costs money - you may also remember that within the span of one year, the Rec Commission raised fees by 30% plus 4% except for Seniors whose fees were raised by 50% plus 4% for the same period.

To organize an Olympic event is a huge undertaking that taxes the resources of even the wealthiest Communities, States and Provinces.

For starters the Olympics will not take place in the District of North Vancouver but at Whistler, which is 90 km away.

Secondly there already is a Vancouver Olympic Committee consisting of people who have considerable experience in such affairs. To duplicate such a Committee when the District has no money for sidewalks, or to properly clean or plow our streets within a reasonable time is ludicrous.

There is, of course, absolutely nothing wrong with the District providing assistance if and when the IOC has decided to go for the Vancouver bid. But the way to do so is by responding to appeals or suggestions from the Olympic Committee already set up, not duplicating such a Committee. That there will be opportunities for the business community on the North Shore should the Olympic event come to fruition is beyond doubt.

But to cash in on the opportunities is the business of business not the business of the Council of the District of North Vancouver or of the District bureaucracy. It is the job of the North Vancouver Chamber of Commerce, in conjunction with the other Chambers on the North Shore and

along the route to Whistler, to make the most of this event. The North Vancouver Chamber of Commerce is already getting a sizable grant from the District to promote and assist the North Vancouver Business Community. There is also the Tourist Committee - it too receives a sizable grant from the District.


Other than providing facilities, most of whom would have to be built from scratch at a cost of hundreds of millions if not billions of dollars, the secret of a successful Olympic bid is an adequate transportation system. One of the Council supporters of the District motion suggested this might be an opportunity to get the Federal Government to expand the Ironworkers Memorial Bridge to accommodate the needed traffic. I can only shake my head in disbelief at such a suggestion.

If the idea is to expand the Sea to Sky highway then it will only result in a total disaster for no amount of widening of that Highway could handle the additional traffic generated by such an event. But if the idea is to build a new highway to Whistler through District neighborhoods such as Capilano or Seymour, as has been suggested, the results would be even more disastrous, not to speak of the expenses to the municipality for providing additional access roads from the District side, never mind the grand scale dislocation of existing District neighborhoods.

The only intelligent solution to address the traffic issue, should such an event materialize, would be via a rail connection between the City of Vancouver and Whistler. Most experts agree with that scenario. But we don't have to set up a District Olympic Committee to pursue that. Should the event materialize, the District can respond and help. But to respond to proposals and requests of assistance is one thing, to set up what to all intents and purposes is a duplicate District of North Vancouver Olympic Committee is nothing less than irresponsible.

Ernie Crist

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