

Subject: FW: Notice of Motion - New Mandate for the Delivery of Public Recreation-Report Councillor Crist

Date: Mon, 15 Sep 2003 00:08:44 -0700

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

To: "FONVCA (E-mail)" <fonvca@fonvca.org>, <Cagebc@yahoo.com>

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

> From: Ernie Crist

> Sent: Sunday, September 14, 2003 10:44 PM

> To: Nathalie Valdes

> Cc: Richard Walton; Maureen McKeon Holmes; Alan Nixon

> Subject: Notice of Motion - New Mandate for the Delivery of Public Recreation-Report Councillor Crist

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> Motion;

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> THAT

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> 1. THAT Staff be requested to prepare, for Council's consideration, a report for the purpose of outlining a new policy for the delivery of recreation, including playing field services, in the District and that this be based on the following objectives:

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> a) the North Vancouver Recreation Commission be dissolved, except that Council appoint a Director of Recreation responsible for the delivery of all recreation programs in the District;

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> b) all expenditures for capital maintenance, programming and the administration of recreation facilities be financed through user fees;

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> c) the Director of Recreation be directly responsible to Council/District Manager and be accommodated on the third floor of the District Municipal Hall with funding for the move to be provided either from the present recreation budget or a special capital grant. The administration space presently occupied by the Commission be turned into usable recreation space;

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> d) the delivery, administration, financing, control, accounting and dispensation of recreational programs by the Director of Recreation be based on the Parkgate, Lower Lonsdale model and/or similar models based on a new District policy and in consultation with local recreation facility boards or recreation facility councils elected from the ranks of relevant neighborhood, community, youth, seniors, sports and other user representatives in any given area;

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> e) notwithstanding item (b) above, the District commit, in-principle, to provide subsidies for specific recreation programs, i.e. seniors, youth, challenged persons, etc. in any given area or for new capital projects as the case may be.

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> f) all District subsidies be controlled by the Director of Recreation in consultation with recreation facility councils or boards for the benefit of District residents only;

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> g) to the extent that the Council of the City of North Vancouver and/or any non-District resident wishes to avail themselves of services, facilities and/or programs located in the District, this be at full cost including the prorated cost of maintenance, administration and the cost of programming exclusive of any subsidy by the District.

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> h) notwithstanding the above, the City be invited to enter into an agreement with the District for a contractual provision of services if so desired provided this is done in consultation with local facility councils affected by such a contract and provided it is done without direct or indirect cost to the District taxpayers.

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> REASON FOR REPORT;

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> The Recreation Commission, by virtue of being responsible to two Councils in practical terms, is outside the effective control of District Council. Annual fee increases

including in one year 51% for seniors for example, have occurred in isolation of any discussion not only with the affected population and in isolation of any meaningful criteria or social policy programs but also outside any meaningful discussion with Council more or less - Council was informed after the event.

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> The Rec Commission was founded to keep the community healthy and be an integral part of preventive community health care. It was founded to provide programs geared for the maximum health benefit for the maximum number of people at minimum cost. To accomplish this the Commission is receiving large subsidies from the District of close to \$ 6 million annually. Notwithstanding, the Commission is departing from this principle and is accommodating, on an increasing scale, private clubs and individual programs at the expense of the taxpaying public. The close to \$ 6 million subsidy from the District taxpayers is taken for granted while the small income from the individual instructions and from private clubs is hailed as success. >

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> In an effort to increase income the Commission is increasingly responding to individual and private interests. To accomplish this the Commission has grown into a huge bureaucracy.

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> UNDER THE PRESENT SHARED SERVICES AGREEMENT WITH THE CITY THE DISTRICT IS HEAVILY SUBSIDIZING THE CITY.

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> While the District provides more than two-thirds of gym space, playing fields and swimming pools, the City, with more than 50% of the population of the District, contributes nothing towards the capital maintenance costs of these District facilities. The capital maintenance cost of recreation facilities such as swimming pools, of which there are three in the District and only one in the City, as well as playing fields, is far greater than it is for cultural facilities such as the Centennial Theatre and other cultural facilities located in the City. The Rec Commission is the sieve through which the District taxpayers are subsidizing the City.

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> The District facilities are rapidly deteriorating and falling into a state of disrepair. Huge amounts of money will have to be spent very shortly to reverse this trend and /or the Commission will find itself in a state of crisis with only one way out, namely, total privatization.

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> The Recreation Commission, with a budget of close to \$17 million has become unwieldy and, in many cases, bureaucratic and unresponsive. Despite the huge subsidy and its huge staff, the Commission fails to maintain facilities in a proper state of repair. While it is true that the capital maintenance funds provided by the District are inadequate, the money which the Commission does receive is not economically spent.


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> Even a casual visit to any of the facilities gives the impression of neglect and decay. For example Lockers have been without locks for years but nobody seems to notice. Relatively small and inexpensive repairs take weeks or months before they are attended to and occur only after the public complains endlessly. It is clear also that, despite the very friendly and in some cases hard work by individual staff members, the Commission as a whole is wasteful of staff resources. It is also clear that, despite the enormous emphasis on a large number of programs, strong business leadership is virtually absent.

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> These are all manifestations of an organization badly in need of a fundamental overhaul - responsibility levels are defective - a typical sign of a bureaucracy that has become moribund. The solution is more direct control by Council over Recreation in general and by the citizens most affected, i.e. neighborhoods and user groups of which the Parkgate model is one example. An additional advantage of the Parkgate model is not only that it is far more responsive to community needs but also that by virtue of being a society (model) it has access to private funding. Parkgate for instance has collected in the neighborhood of a million dollars in any given year.

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> Two critical points above all stand out. Public Recreation must be made accountable, it must be decentralized and it must fulfill its mandate - TO PROVIDE PROGRAMS FOR THE MAXIMUM HEALTH BENEFIT OF THE MAXIMUM NUMBER OF PEOPLE AT MINIMUM COST, RATHER THAN MAXIMUM PROGRAMS FOR THE MINIMUM NUMBER OF PEOPLE AT THE EXPENSE OF THE PUBLIC AT LARGE. Public recreation constitutes a fundamental municipal service and pays huge heallth dividends. It's purpose is not to make profit yet it must be run along strong and tested

business principles. This at present is not the case and needs to be rectified quickly and in a fashion commensurate with the challenge.

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> *Ernie Crist*
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