

Subject: [Fwd: Can we make our Council Accountable?]

Date: Fri, 28 Feb 2003 17:58:37 -0800

From: Brian Platts <bplatts@shaw.ca>

To: Corrie Kost <kost@triumf.ca>

----- Original Message -----

Subject: Can we make our Council Accountable?

Date: Fri, 28 Feb 2003 14:16:11 -0800

From: Barbara Murray <murrllaw@telus.net>

To: Ernie Crist <ernie_crist@dnv.org>, Corrie Kost <corrie@kost.ca>

CC: "FONVCA (E-mail)" <fonvca@fonvca.org>, Directors Team <managecomm@dnv.org>

References: <52819DEA9F2ED74FBF51B612D0E5A01CB76575@mail2k.cdnv.dnv.ca>

To All Concerned Citizens,

Since Jan'03 I have been following Councilor Crist's numerous motions and exhaustive quest for accountability and democracy within our Municipal Hall. I have myself dabbled in trying to make the District staff and Council aware of a few 'oversights' on Jan 25'03(Public Input of Budget) re: Sanitation tax for bear awareness of \$2.70/household. I was promised the report would be back to myself and Council in two to three weeks. End of fifth week and still no report. Two weeks ago I asked for assistance via e-mail from Muri, Nixon and Walton intentionally leaving out Council Crist because I know he has his hands full and he is seen as the 'subversive' by the other councilors. The only councilor that responded to me positively was Councilor Walton. He assured me he would keep pressure on Zerr to answer my questions. Council Nixon forwarded my e-mail request for assistance to Mr. Zerr which seemed to only inflame Mr. Zerr more than my presentation and perhaps slowed down the report? As of Jan.25th Mr.Zerr does not hold my 'whistler-blowing' and volunteer duties in very high regard as now is also the view of other members of staff and council. Since my report I have experienced in a small degree the same alienation and discrimination that district staff and members of council continually inflict on Councilor Crist. I am continuing my district volunteer involvement(Bear Network) even though the road is now a little bumpier but thankfully more transparent. In a personal interview with Mr. Zerr last week I expressed the view to him that regardless of his frustration with me and my questions that 'he can't fire volunteers'-he informed me that he actually holds the opposite view.-interesting....

It seems to me that our members of council are glorified civil servants working under the direction of senior staff, not working from their own conscience, beliefs or for the people who elected them. I have been pondering this huge problem at the Hall for some time now and how to minimize it?

I put it to all concerned that WE ALL should MAKE our elected officials accountable. It seems most members of council do not answer e-mails but they do answer telephones and face-to-face meetings. E-mail has made it far too easy to be an observer and not a participant. Also e-mail allows staff to be forewarned of issues before they go before council and plan strategies to evade or suppress. When we have an issue we should search out all councilors and the Mayor for personal comment and ask for their assistance to resolve the issue. Once we have made contact by telephone or in-person we should follow-up with a letter to that member as a record if needed in future. With this approach we may hear how some members honestly stand on an issue before they can be tutored by staff and others. Hopefully, we could attract 2-3 members to work on our issue, not just Council Crist. Maybe the vindictive, petty crusade to muzzle Council Crist would be finally eliminated if members were busy participating in the democratic process properly as elected to do, rather than awaiting direction from staff at every turn.

Please let me know if any of you already pursue this 'hands on' lobbying

strategy when bringing issues forward? If you do have you had success and which members of council respond the best? Thank you for any input you can give me in my search for accountable and accessible government.

Barb Murray
604-924-0807

----- Original Message -----

From: "Ernie Crist"
To: "Corrie Kost" ; "Don Bell2" ; "Janice Harris" ; "Lisa Muri" ; "Maureen McKeon Holmes" ; "Alan Nixon" ; "Richard Walton" ; "Agnes Hilsen"
Cc: "FONVCA (E-mail)" ; "Directors Team"

Sent: Wednesday, February 26, 2003 10:10 PM
Subject: RE: Gasoline Taxes - Feds keep theirs - Province adds more.

Dear Mr. Kost:

This particular issue has been raised by me many times in Council in various forms. I also submitted, via Council, various resolutions to be forwarded to both to UBCM and the FCM Conventions in the past. Other Municipalities have done likewise. Needless to say, it should continue to be done at every conceivable level and opportunity.

However, my ability to be pro-active on this and other important matters has been curtailed by the attitude of District Council. They claim that I am making too many demands on Staff. However, since I do virtually all this work myself, this allegation needless to say is a red herring. It can only be construed as a diversion from other serious shortcomings in the District. It is certainly not based on any kind of understanding as to what the purpose is of the UBCM and the FCM, of which we are members.

The whole idea of these bodies is precisely for municipalities to bring resolutions forward so they may be debated at the convention floor. You will understand that constant belittling of such efforts, harping and roadblocks against me in putting such resolutions forward does nothing to encourage any kind of pro-activeness.

And yet I notice that although I am criticized for doing so, nobody else is submitting any resolutions to these bodies. One Councillor, in particular, has used every opportunity to attack my efforts but has never submitted a single resolution herself. The level of ignorance is such that this kind of initiative is treated as harmful rather than the other way around. The result is that the District is being dragged down to the level of mediocrity and even below.

Only recently yet another charge was made that I am making too many demands on staff. When the matter was investigated it turned out to be a total fabrication. My demand on staff time was well within that allocated by policy. Still, it once again diverted attention away from the real issues, and created an aura of discouragement, hostility, divisiveness and frustration. It is merely the continuation of harassment by other means. The clerk too stated that although my demand on staff time was well below that allowed by policy, "it will be closely watched".

Also, it is not very encouraging to go to the trouble to prepare a resolution without even a guarantee that I would be able to explain it to the public or even to Council when it comes up on the agenda. You may recall that only recently I made yet another attempt to get this anti-democratic, subjective and counterproductive policy changed but the Mayor, with the help of several Councillors, nixed it once again.

As usual one Councillor, along with the Mayor, was in the forefront of the fight against this basic democratic right. I don't know whether such

behavior is based on jealousy, ignorance or just plain politically motivated bias or a combination of all these factors, but it certainly does not help to promote any kind of constructive endeavor.

I am passing this information on to you in the hope that it will clarify the situation and also state what in my opinion is the reason why more initiatives and more leadership is not being provided by the District in many important areas including the one you have mentioned in connection with the Federal Government's "theft" of Funds belonging to Municipalities which is part and parcel of the struggle for a new constitution under which local government is recognized as a legitimate level of government.

Thank you,

Yours truly,

Ernie Crist

-----Original Message-----

From: Corrie Kost [mailto:corrie@kost.ca]

Sent: Wednesday, February 26, 2003 1:10 PM

To: Don Bell2; Ernie Crist; Janice Harris; Lisa Muri; Maureen McKeon Holmes; Alan Nixon; Richard Walton; Agnes Hilsen

Subject: Gasoline Taxes - Feds keep theirs - Province adds more.

Your Worship & Members of Council,

In the latest Local Government Bulletin
(http://www.localgovernment.ca/show_library.cfm?id=88)
it states,

"The federal government collected about \$4.3 billion in gas tax alone in 2002. The Federal budget announcement only earmarks \$100 million/year nationally toward municipal roads and bridges, as well as sewer and water infrastructure."

As a community we should be putting a lot more pressure on the Federal Government to spend these gasoline taxes in areas they were intended for. Likewise the Province should do the same - and not put more gasoline taxes in place which only encourages the Feds to keep theirs!

Yours truly,

Corrie Kost