

Subject:**Date:** Tue, 4 Oct 2005 21:56:30 -0700**From:** "Ernie Crist" <ernie_crist@dnv.org>**To:** <fonvca@fonvca.org>

A MESSAGE FROM ERNIE CRIST;

"Global demand, Energy prices at record levels, Residential Construction Boom, Labour Shortages, Wages, 2010 Olympic, RAV, Fort McMurray and Hurricanes were given as reasons for the Lynn Valley Library debacle at last night's Council meeting. I am surprised they left out the flea plague in Somalia.

In reality, it is much simpler and can be summed up in a few words; incompetence on a scale which even for the District is unusual, unless of course, it was contrived.

What are the facts and what is underneath the flowers on top of the coffin. The story must be told, if for no other reason than to pay tribute to those still committed to good government, standards of excellence and truth. It is also in response to intellectuals who ask me whether "I am still fighting with Council".

The Lynn Valley Library needed to be replaced. This conclusion was reached at least 12 years ago. The existing Library not only did not meet safety standards but it was also too small. The development of Lynn Valley, hailed as a Pedestrian Oriented Town Center, turning regional Car Mall later, provided an opportunity to build a civic square adjacent to the Mall, with a new Library and commercial building being its center. The Library would be big enough to also accommodate the Museum and Archives, looking for a home.

With the Library needing only 40,000 s.f. of the 100,000 s.f. building, the opportunity was there to accommodate the Museum and Archives leaving a sizable space for cultural and social activities - a community center. There is no community center in Lynn Valley even though it is the most populous area in the municipality. Some people point to the Molly Nye House but a building, the size of single family home is not a community center and only people bereft of knowledge would come to such a conclusion.

With the development around a 5 block radius of the Lynn Valley Mall and cognizant of modern planning methods, I suggested we should get enough money from the developers in return for rezoning their properties to higher density. It is called sharing of profits which is something most people do understand. It is common practice in other places. In the District Council Chambers it sounded like a curse. However, it would pay not only for the cost of the infrastructure needed to densify Lynn Valley but also contribute towards paying for community facilities. The District never pursued this and instead is in debt. It amounts to millions of dollars. You have to hand it to the District, they are smart.

But not to lose sight of the Library itself, to pay for the Library, the District developed a fiscal plan which saw 7,5 million including \$1,5 million for the Museum and Archives approved via a referendum, a minimum of \$ 4 million from the sale of the existing Library site, \$ 2 million from a Federal Grant and 7'4 million allocated from the District Heritage Fund. The total money firmly in place was therefore \$21 Million, enough to pay not only for the Library but also the adjacent commercial building just in case. The completion of the project was set for 2003 and later, the spring of 2004. And this is where politics took over and where skulduggery commenced.

The first casualty was the Museum and Archives. It was moved from the Library site to the Lynn Valley School site. Net loss to the District \$ 3 million give or take a million. The \$ 21 million was now only \$19


million. The second and more severe blow was when it was decided to reduce the commercial building from 5 stories to 3 stories because "Lynn Valley did not get enough sunshine". A member of the monitoring committee ostensibly had indicated that 5 stories was too high. The fact that all the adjacent residential buildings were already 4 and 5 stories high, never entered the heads of the geniuses. I strongly suspect they were put up to it - nobody is that dumb.

I am almost certain it was calculated since, with only 3 stories, the private developer walked away. The District now had an excuse to accept responsibility for the commercial building and obtain additional money from the taxpayers to pay for it. The Library too had to be reduced from 5 stories to 3. Sacrificed were 40,000 s.f. of community space. However, the President of the Lynn Valley Seniors Association told Council the Seniors don't need such a space anyway - music to the ears of Don Bell and friends. There never was a shortage of gullibility in the District, I am sorry to say, and this was yet a perfect example.

The fiscal parameters were now changed to devise a way for the public to pay \$35 million for what essentially was much less of a project. The latest blow came on Monday October 3 when staff informed Council that the cost of the project had gone up even more but they said it is OK since the commercial building is only 2 stories. When I asked questions how the building came to be only 2 stories, the Mayor stated that my questions were inappropriate just as she did when I stated previously that the Lynn Valley Plan was a hoax. Methinks the Mayor did not want me ask questions about what everybody in the room knew or should have known that this was yet another attempt at skulduggery at the expense of the public.

Bottom-line - what was originally a project costing \$ 20 million to be finished in 2003 or 2004 at the latest is now \$ 35 million, except that it is much less of a project and has nothing to do with Fort McMurrey. But, said one member of the public don't worry, the people of the District won't mind, they are used to it. Those responsible are sure to get re-elected.

Ernie Crist

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