

**Subject: RE:****Date:** Thu, 7 Apr 2005 20:22:25 -0700**From:** "Ernie Crist" <ernie\_crist@dnv.org>**To:** "James Ridge" <James\_Ridge@dnv.org>, "Mayor and Council - DNV" <Council@dnv.org>, "Senior Management Committee" <managecomm@dnv.org>, <Council@cnv.org>, <nvarstcouncil@telus.net>**CC:** <fonvca@fonvca.org>, <Cagebc@yahoo.com>, <info@phtheatre.org>, <seymourg@vcn.bc.ca>, <seymourartgallery@shawcable.com>

Dear Mr. Ridge;

I concur with your position. The North Shore Arts Council has been mandated by Council with the responsibility to display Art objects in the Municipal Hall. This includes paintings. Whether or not an Art object is or is not suitable should therefore not be up to any individual to decide.

The reason why the Arts Council has been so charged, presumably, is because, due to their training, they are better equipped to differentiate between Art which exposes violence and Art which glorifies violence and sexuality for profit's sake. This is the case on Television for instance and I must remind the objectors to these paintings that never at any time did any of them ever speak up when Councillor Crist made motions to take any action to this effect. This includes CUPE or any of the "Together Against Violence" persons.

My personal observation of the paintings in question is that they were in no way glorifying violence nor could they be construed as sexual exploitation of the female body as was charged. Subsequently, they were in no way in violation of the positive workplace policy. This at least is my opinion. Painting the human body, however scantily dressed or even nude can by itself not be considered amoral since the human body is nature's ultimate expression of beauty and as no less an artist than the great Michelangelo stated has been created by God himself.

The people who have objected to these paintings may not be aware of this and may never have visited a swimming pool or a beach much less any of the great churches in the great cities of Europe including even the Vatican itself, which is the headquarters of the Catholic Church and the Pope of Rome for those who may not be aware of this.

On the other hand, if an individual deems a particular art object unsuitable to be displayed in the Municipal Hall I believe he/she should have every right to bring his/ her concerns first and foremost to the attention of the Arts Council. No action should have been taken before this was done.

Therefore, it was wrong to demand the removal of these paintings before the Arts Council had even an opportunity to respond. If any member of Council has a problem with any of the paintings, he/she should have put such concerns in the form of a motion and state the reason why. To have any of these paintings removed without going through those steps simply because one or more individuals objected was a most unfortunate form of censorship. It was an arbitrary if not brutal interference in the mandate of the Arts Council and the Arts Community by non experts.

In light of this,  
I hereby request that the paintings in question be returned to the Hall to be exhibited until such time when the Arts Council has had an opportunity to respond and Council if necessary has made a decision.

Ernie Crist

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> *From:* James Ridge  
> *Sent:* Thursday, April 07, 2005 5:04 PM  
> *To:* Mayor and Council - DNV

> Subject:

>  
> Cathy Adams is very unhappy with me for not immediately acting to  
> remove the entire art exhibition, and has sent me a number of e-mails.  
> She takes the position (as you may have read in the many e-mails) that  
> I have an obligation under the positive workplace policy to  
> immediately and unilaterally remove anything that is the source of  
> even a single complaint. I take a different position.  
> Copied below is an e-mail I sent to her today on the topic for your  
> information.

>  
> James

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>  
> Ms Adams,

>  
> Certainly we are aware of your complaint and are considering how it  
> falls under our various policies. A formal complaint is required and  
> Mr. Johnson will guide you to the process. I do want to stress that  
> it is not the case that the simple receipt of a complaint compels us  
> to remove, without any consideration of the issue, the offending  
> item(s). An investigation is undertaken after a complaint is made and  
> a determination of the appropriate action is made. In my experience,  
> in most cases there is little debate about whether an item is  
> inherently offensive. In this case there was considerable disagreement  
> on the extent to which the art was inherently offensive.

>  
> Even when a complaint is made, in some occasions we choose not to act  
> on a complaint. For instance, I received several complaints last year  
> about the nativity scene on the roof to the District hall over  
> December, including an extensive, written, and extremely articulate  
> complaint from a person who was deeply offended by the religious  
> display for a variety of legitimate personal reasons. After  
> consideration, however, we chose not to remove the nativity scene or  
> the menorah.


>  
> In response to your complaint, your concerns (and my own concerns)  
> about the art show were communicated in my absence to the Arts  
> Council. The Council chose to remove some of the paintings, and took  
> the entirely reasonable and responsible step of inviting  
> representatives of women's organizations to review the paintings and  
> provide advice. Similarly Mr. McPherson convened a group of women to  
> review the art and provide him with advice. As you know others in the  
> community and on council had their own concerns, also legitimate,  
> about the issue of censorship and communicated those concerns to the  
> Arts Council who had to deal with both sets of legitimate, but  
> conflicting, opinions.

>  
> The issue may be debated further in the future in regards to  
> Councillor Crist's notice of motion.

>  
> Finally, the reason you did not receive an out of office notification  
> from my e-mail account during my vacation is that my mailbox quickly  
> overloaded, at which point the system refuses to sent out more mail,  
> including vacation notices.

>  
> James Ridge  
> CAO

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