Subject: Response to Mr. Russell Sykes re - Request for Information - "Complaints under the Assessment Act".
   Date: Fri, 4 Feb 2005 06:29:15 -0800
   From: "Ernie Crist" <ernie_crist@dnv.org>
     To: "Nathalie Valdes" <Nathalie_Valdes@dnv.org>, "James Ridge" <James_Ridge@dnv.org>
     CC: "Mayor and Council - DNV" <Council@dnv.org>, "Senior Management Committee" <managecomm@dnv.org>,
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Dear Mr. Sykes:

I am very much aware of the serious shortcomings relating to property
assessment rolls. In the past I have on several occasion and in response
to a few individuals such as yourself and Mr. Cassidy residing on Ranger
Avenue in the District attempted to address several of the most blatant
shortcomings. The result was that on more than one occasion
representatives of the Regional Office of the BC Assessment Authority
appeared before Council to either deny that there were any such
shortcomings and or promise to address them. Judging by the recent
changes in administration it may well be that my efforts based on the
work done by people such as yourself and Mr. Cassidy have led to some
success.

However, on the whole District residents appear not to be interested in
this issue and rather pay more than they should, especially those whose
properties are at the lower end of the value spectrum. There is a
definite pattern here. Properties below average are assessed much closer
to the real or replacement value than properties at the higher end of
the value spectrum which have a tendency to be under assessed. This
means that properties at the lower end of the value spectrum subsidise
those at the higher value end. However, it appears that the people who
are affected by this rather pay more instead of uniting and collectively
challenge the injustice. They remind me of the Eloys as in H.G.Wells
Time Machine. The Eloys were very nice people but they were used as food
by the Morlocks.

Several points stand out.

1) The District of North Vancouver pays more than its fair share of the
regional assessment administration.

2) While residential properties on the whole are under assessed, the
discrepancy between real value and assessed value is far greater in
industrial and commercial properties. When it comes to industrial
properties the discrepancies between replacement value and assessed
value is particularly blatant.

3) The Assessment Authorities are making it extremely difficult to
challenge assessments since they will allow no class action. This means
that each and every individual has to conduct a challenge on his/her
own behalf which makes it difficult.

4)) In cases where assessments have been challenged and have gone to the
Supreme Court as has been done, the court found for the plaintiff.

5) Motivation to challenge the BC Assessment Authority is further
blunted by the fact that the BC Assessment Authority can hire any number
of lawyers while an individual has to pay himself /herself for the legal
expenses.

6) The BC Assessment Authority further blunts the motivation to
challenge real or perceived injustices by threatening "slander"
against plaintiffs.

7) In the District of North Vancouver it has been difficult to assist
people in challenging the BC Assessment Authorities because neither the
past Mayor nor past Councils had any real inclination to help hard
pressed citizens. Needless to say, if the affected residents would show

up by the hundreds at the Municipal door, District Council would be far
more inclined to speak up on behalf of our citizens. As it is, it was
very difficult to even get a motion introduced never mind passed in
defence of our residents who are getting shafted.

8) On the whole BC Assessment is "fair" to all concerned. It just so
happens that on the whole it is fairer to those who have higher valued
properties i.e. the rich. In a sense it resembles our justice system
which is also fair to all since it prevents not only the poor from
sleeping on benches but also the rich to quote a French Cynic.

Yours truly,

Ernie Crist

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