

Subject: Things that make me mad

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7 September 2005

I have just now been told that Go-West Campers will shortly be moving to a new location it has purchased in Coquitlam. Go-West has been a stable North Vancouver business for 26 years and the announcement really makes me angry - for several reasons.

First of all, for some years now, the company has made no secret of the fact that it was desirous of finding expanded facilities. Despite that, apparently unconcerned that the District was in danger of losing a valued corporate citizen with an impeccable international reputation, Council appears to have initiated few, if any, negotiations aimed at encouraging the company to stay here.

Apart from the job-creation and taxpaying benefits of having such a successful - and expanding - operation located here, all three North/West Vancouver municipalities have benefitted from the tourism business that spins off from the RV Rentals that are at the heart of the Go-West business. RV equipment and fuel purchases, Capilano Mall, Park Royal and Marine Drive shopping, Grouse Mountain - all are draws to the affluent European and U.S. tourists who abound in the Capilano RV Park....I know how much of it happens because I have lived there for nearly 15 years.

When the company makes its official announcement that this move is about to happen - and it is a done deal, there's nothing I can do to change that - the community reaction is likely mirror that of the fallout from the departure of Ballard Power Systems.

This whole sorry event is particularly galling, coming as it does on the heels of last week's Sharp announcement that TransLink is all set to buy some of the BC Rail lands and foist a bus depot on them, heedless of the District's right to be master in its own house. It is *entirely* because Council has been in such disarray for years that GVRD, TransLink and, now, our TransLink "representative" have lost all respect for this municipality and feel they can walk all over it.

If Council was out and about actually talking to the people about what was going on in the community, instead of bickering around the Council table, it would have begun to develop a District vision for the BC Rail lands immediately after the Premier announced his non-sale of this BC asset. In combination with the Marine Drive redevelopment, Council had a golden opportunity to create a live-work village on that site - one that could have included green space, tourist-friendly boutique stores, a museum/art galley and, even, an beautifully-designed RV park of its own. The option were limitless.

It has long been rumoured that the Squamish are about to redevelop their lands adjacent to Park Royal. It is plain for anyone to see that many of the mobile homes on the lands alongside the Capilano River are becoming run down. They cannot be sold by their aging and often ailing owners because of the uncertainty of the leases. The Squamish are not business fools; they will know that, with this latest development at Go-West, they are likely to lose much of their tourist business to RV Parks in Whistler, Burnaby, and the Fraser Valley. This move can only serve to spur them on to redevelop.

Whether or not West Vancouver and the District like it, the resulting traffic will become a nightmare - and it will be a nightmare that municipal and provincial taxpayers will have to pay to relieve, not the Squamish.

It's getting to the point that, looking back over the past three to six years, the single success story of the last two District councils has been that James Ridge was hired as CAO and that he was set free to do the job.

It is hardly any secret that, in the lead-up to the November elections, citizens have begun to compare the leadership shown by Mr. Ridge and his invigorated team, to the dearth of leadership to be found in most of their elected officials. If anyone should wonder why, Council has only to look in the mirror.

Sincerely,
Liz James

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