

DATE: DECEMBER 17, 2018

A SPECIAL MEMO TO:

MAYOR MALCOLM BRODIE

COUNSELLORS:

CAROLE DAY

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HAROLD STEEVES

BILL MCNULTY

LINDA MCPHAIL

KELSEY GREENE

MICHAEL WOLFE

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My name is David H. Smith, and I live in Hamilton Village at 22650 Fraserbank Crescent.

I have been a resident in Richmond in 1983-1984 (1) and from 2003 - to the present. I have, over the years, lived in six other Lower Mainland cities / municipalities.

I started my work experience in 1975; I have been a retailer, an educator, a professional conductor of American Music Theatre, and now I am a licensed Realtor in British Columbia.

I have no issue with the current civic administration, however, I feel that I am compelled to prepare a statement on the issue of lot size and house construction size facing the residents of Richmond. I ask the indulgence of the Mayor and Council members to consider my words as advisement.

This issue of building on Richmond lands is complex, at face value. However, it is clear that, over the years, corporate and private construction of various sized properties in Richmond has grown at an exponential rate. Household lot sizes which were *de rigeur* a few years ago appear to be running contrary to some Richmond residents and some members of Richmond Council.

During the fall civic election campaign of 2018 it became apparent that some members of Richmond Council were running on a campaign platform of restricting the construction of excessively large houses on Richmond farm lands. I recall that I applauded this notion, and in fact, I cast my vote for many of you in the Advance Polling process, prior to my departure for the People's Republic of China, and the Republic of Singapore.

Now I do not have an interest per se in lot sizes, as I am not building a property on such, however, I believe, something must be stated when lot sizes are changed from 500 sq m to 400 sq m. This new measure of a lot size is a dramatic alteration to the ones that were being discussed prior to, and during, the civic election campaign.

Since the fall election, the numbers have changed. Questions such as: Are residential lots on River Road in Hamilton exempt from restrictions placed on ALR land? Are house sizes on River Road in Hamilton exempt from restrictions placed on ALR land? What happens to affected property owners in this case? What redress is available from Richmond City Council to them to mitigate this issue? If the issue is land and house construction size today, what will the topic be before Council tomorrow? Who knows? Answers to these questions need to be found - and soon.

The electorate is fickle. Shakespeare wrote: "Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned." Now to paraphrase the Bard, one might say that "The Electorate is fickle and hell hath no fury like an Electorate scorned."

There is a mandate from the people of Richmond - yes. That was granted in the recent fall civic election. Four years is a long time in politics - but I would suggest that - given the circumstances - the electorate will remember if civic bills were passed in haste. Governments are not voted out of office by the Electorate; they lose office by doing things that irritate the Electorate. British Columbia has a history of governments which enacted legislation too fast - and too much - without thinking of the Electorate. One only has to look back on the time of Premier Dave Barrett's NDP government from 1972 - 1975. Yes, December 11, 1975 was Dave Barrett's reckoning with the Electorate; he even lost his Coquitlam seat in the Legislature to an unknown used car salesman, Mr. George Kerster.

The issue tonight is not farmland or ALR or lot size. This issue is an apparent lack of due process and public consultation to the affected parties in a timely manner. It would appear that the rules concerning this issue have changed dramatically. Just like goal posts moving during a game. The original vote was to 500 sq m then, it was changed to 400 sq m at, an albeit, apparent whim. Why, one must ask? With the provincial government's Bill 52 Agricultural Land Commission Amendment Act, 2018, setting home size limits for 500 sq m for the entire province, and set for First Reading, Second Reading, Third Reading, and ultimately, to receive Royal Assent in 2019, why now?

The economy of British Columbia has, historically, been based upon 1) Forestry; 2) Mining; and 3) Tourism. Well, in 2018, it would appear that the Real Estate Industry is one of the leaders in the economic development in all areas of the province. That being said, one has to recognize the building and trades people of British Columbia; they are leading contributors to the British Columbia economy.

And again, one must ask, where do these individuals fit in with this scheme of reducing the size of a lot with no time for change or accommodation? Are these individuals, and their jobs, and livelihoods, supposed to be done away with?

Money flows from the owner of a property for redevelopment; the owner engages builders, architects, electricians, and so on, for construction. These tradespeople receive payment for their services and, in due course, pay for products and services in their own British Columbia communities. They play a vital role and part of the British Columbia economic stimulus.

This is the bigger economic picture for Richmond and British Columbia.

On a related point, the former Progressive Conservative Prime Minister, the Right Honourable Brian Mulroney, who won a decisive electoral victory in September 1984, in which he received the largest elected seat majority in Canadian electoral history [211/282 seats], decided to go against his "Sacred Trust" on not "clawing back" OAP

Pensions. The responding letter writing campaign waged by "Grey Power" individuals, (which, incidentally, included my father) prompted Mr. Mulroney to reconsider and rescind his order of financial pension clawbacks. He showed courage and a desire to focus on what the Electorate wanted - and showed leadership in listening to the voters.

Richmond City Council has a mandate from the Electorate for change - yes. But not to move the "proverbial goal posts" on construction related issues at an apparent "whim." The Electorate voted you in; the Electorate can vote you out. It is the Electorate - the people (in a Democracy) who holds the power. Council acts on the wishes of the public. Others may listen obediently to the voice of government with unquestioning and blind loyalty - but that should definitely not happen in democracy in Canada. A healthy democracy holds rigorous debate on the pertinent issues of the day.

In conclusion, it was the United States President Abraham Lincoln who declared:

"You can fool all the people some of the time, and some of the people all the time, but you cannot fool all the people all the time."

Thus, I respectfully beseech the members of Richmond City Council to consider carefully the rationale and efficacy of the recent land lot building size issue before them, and to vote this current proposal of construction size limits of 400 sq m down, and therefore, direct city staff to revise city policy that will align itself with the provincial government's plan for house size lots and buildings.

I trust that Richmond City Council will consider my comments in the spirit to which they were spoken.

Respectfully submitted,

David H. Smith.

22650 Fraserbank Crescent, RICHMOND. B. C.

778 928 8828; davidhsmith2010@gmail.com