

## **SPEAKING NOTES – JUN 14, 2022 – COW 1:10 pm**

Good afternoon, madam mayor, chair Eric Anderson, members of council, staff and guests. We wish to thank the mayor for asking for our presentation back on January 24. I am Herbert Vesely, President of the Squamish Seniors Centre Society.

It is a great show of faith to allow us to be here today with little information provided outside of the topic of our presentation: **WHERE WE HAVE BEEN, WHERE WE ARE AND WHERE WE WOULD LIKE TO BE GOING.**

With this I would like to turn it over to Mike Sherlock and Francois Morel, both are members of our Board.

### **Following the Presentation**

We were asked on several occasions to share this presentation with District staff in advance, but we respectfully declined and you can see why. The second last slide encompasses our aim: **RETURN THE SENIORS CENTRE TO THE SENIORS.**

We are asking Council for a change in direction so we may fulfill our 2009 mandate "*to advise and assist in the operation of a centre for the recreational, educational and social activities for the senior citizens of the Squamish area*".

Prior to the opening of the new Seniors Centre in 2009 we were asked if we wanted to run the Centre ourselves. We made the wrong call then and would now like to correct our mistake. Over the past five years or so we encountered too many roadblocks to carry out our mandate. We are asking that consideration be given to operating the Seniors Centre in a manner consistent with the interest of Seniors as is done in a number of nearby communities: North Vancouver, South Delta, Sechelt to name a few. But such an operational model already exists right here: It is the "Youth Centre" or "Foundry Sea to Sky" to use its new name.

This new operational model would not only serve the Seniors better but would save the community tax dollars because of an extensive involvement by senior volunteers. The District owned facility would continue to be owned and maintained by District staff.

We are ready to respond to any questions or comments you may have, perhaps also coming from the audience.

### **Facts – not used in my presentation due to insufficient time**

- The 2008 letter of agreement by the mayor at the time defined our involvement as being advisory in the running of the Seniors Centre. "*Staff would consult with the Advisory Committee on such items as membership, fees and recreation programs and services of interest to the Seniors community.*" This worked only until about 2012 when present management arrived.
- The 2017 reconciliation agreement did not work because its main conclusion was not adhered to by senior staff – age limit 19+ outside of 9-4 on weekdays.
- The 2015 collaboration agreement was unsuccessful for the same reason – it spelled out an age limit of 50+.

- The 2017 name change from "Squamish Seniors Centre" to "The 55 Activity Centre" did not result in the hoped-for increase in participation. Our input was ignored.
- The provision of a critical kitchen service collapsed; our input was ignored.
- We had been given to understand that the using the schools for children events is not an option for the Recreation Department. However the School Board informed us that Schools have facilities available for rent by anyone at certain hours.
- The Society is paying rent for activities and programs put on by the Society for Seniors, whereas the Squamish Arts Council got a room in The 55 for \$1.00/year for 5 years and are given a key to boot for 24/7 access through the kitchen, no less. They could be using the schools instead.
- Seniors are paying drop-in fees for activities to which the Recreation department makes no contribution except provide space – e.g. Carpet Bowling, Cribb, Quilting etc.
- This Arts Council deal happened without consulting us.
- Notwithstanding that we were repeatedly told that "The 55" is underutilized, a 10 year, \$400,000 commitment was entered into to rent more space at the Westwinds building for Seniors programming without consulting our Society at the outset. Then a Steering committee was established to rubberstamp this decision.
- Recently we were asked to provide a \$5 Million liability insurance in order to be permitted to continue storing Society files on the premises, that had been there since the opening in 2009.
- We used to have a volunteer appreciation day organized by staff. I don't recall this event happening in recent years, perhaps because under the current operational model we don't need or welcome volunteer participation.