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May 17, 2011

Dear David Raven, Mayor,  
City of Revelstoke

I hope that your Town Hall Meeting went well last night. I read with some interest your letter dated May 10, 2011. I normally have the utmost respect for elected public officials. I was very shocked to realize that you wrote the letter without doing any sort of checking, research, looking into the history, examining the intent, or checking out the source of the complaint. I know that you didn't do any of those things because if you had taken even the slightest bit of time to check out what was going on, you wouldn't have written the sort of letter you did and you wouldn't have cc'ed all those people.

I consider the letter, and the fact that you chose to cc everybody and his brother, a very direct attempt to intimidate or bully an independent businessman without bothering to check any of the facts. I consider this an extremely irresponsible act for someone in a position of public trust.

Did it ever cross your mind to do some basic research? Not to rely solely on a complaint that was no doubt registered by a bitter competitor? To ask what would drive an organization like West Trek to take such extreme and drastic measures? To try to determine what was the intent of the web write up? Perhaps discuss how we could re-word it to make it clearer that the point we are making is that on a 4 day, time critical, rushed tour of the Full Circuit Summer Rocky Mountains out of Vancouver, Revelstoke is not the "ultimate" place to spend the first night as claimed by the competition? Maybe soften the wording to let readers know that Revelstoke is a great little town and a great starting point for touring the North Kootenays or Revelstoke National Park but not the Rockies. Revelstoke isn't even IN the Rockies!

But you didn't do any of that. Rather than use diplomacy you used intimidation and bullying tactics. There was NO attempt to contact West Trek directly in a non-confrontational and private manner.

So, I'll answer the questions that you didn't bother to ask.

Here's a bit of my history. I started this company in the mid-90s. For years I struggled under an anti-small business government apparently determined to keep out entrepreneurs and business people. So, I joined the Liberal Party. I donated generously to their campaign fund and I campaigned on their behalf. In other words, I fought back. Apparently a lot of other people were equally fed up with small minded bureaucrats as the Liberals swept to power.

You clearly have an issue with the practice of negative advertising. I agree 100%. So do we. For YEARS we have been the brunt of unrelenting and endless negative advertising campaigns by a huge multi-national corporation. I believe you know them. Everything from:

- Bold face type in advertising blaring out NO SCHOOL BUSES accompanied by pictures of a school bus with an X through it.
- Assertions that "Canmore is located approximately 100km from Banff which makes for cheaper accomadations" (their spelling). Amazingly, we didn't find it necessary to run crying to the Mayor of Canmore. Geography is clearly not their strong suit.
- Claims that their BUDGET tour stays in Canmore while Banff is for DELUXE tours. Again we didn't find it necessary to run whining to the mayor.
- We had to live with the same competitor running around to our clients telling them that they didn't impose "late booking penalties" to put a negative advertising twist on our Early Bird Specials.
- Etc, etc, etc.

Yes Mr. Mayor, we are all too familiar with being at the brunt end of negative advertising. The very company that set you up to write your letter is the undisputed master of that tactic.

So, we've had ENOUGH! After years of turning the other cheek, this David is standing up to the huge multi national Goliath and fighting back. If that offends you, so be it.

A wise man once said – "He who most fears the truth is a liar" anon

So we set about telling our clients the truth. The fact that this is infuriating our competition just lets us know that we are doing the right thing. Here are the facts.

According to the BC Ministry of Transportation website, the distance from Revelstoke to Golden is 148 km and the driving time is 1 hour and 39 minutes. That is a fact.

According to every map I've been able to locate, there is a time line between Revelstoke and Golden which places Golden in the same time zone as Lake Louise and Banff, the primary destinations of Rocky Mountain tours. Revelstoke is on the wrong side of that time line. That is a fact.

When you combine the above 2 facts and compare a bus that leaves Revelstoke (or a resort 15 minutes west of Revelstoke) at 8:00 am and a bus that leaves Golden at 8:00 am; the Revelstoke bus will arrive at Lake Louise at approx. 12:15pm local time allowing for one very quick rest break en route. The Golden bus will arrive at approx. 9:05am local time.

Clearly that means that passengers staying in Golden instead of Revelstoke will enjoy an extra 3+ hours in the prime tourist area. When you only have one day to visit this area, that extra time is critical. I don't believe that even the competition can deny that what people are paying to see on a Rocky Mountain tour are the Rocky Mountains. Golden is in a valley with the Rockies on one side. Revelstoke is 1 hour and 39 minutes west of the Rockies.

Next, we are dealing with international students. Less scrupulous operators might try to take advantage of 2 key points.

1/ They have very little or, in most cases, no knowledge of Canadian or BC geography. If someone tells them that Revelstoke is the "ultimate" for a Rocky Mountain tour they have no way of knowing otherwise unless someone clearly and definitively points it out to them.

2/ English is their second language. Dealing with this demographic means that you can't mince words or sugar coat facts. Maps and clear descriptions are necessary so that they understand what they are paying for and don't base it purely on glossy brochures and misleading claims.

Third, if you had fully read the website you would have seen that we were clearly stating that all tours are not created equal and that the determining factor between a great tour and a cheap imitation is LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION. Further, this applies to our Summer Rockies program only. Given that criteria, no one can argue against the fact that Golden is a better choice of jumping off points for a visit to the Rockies than Revelstoke when time is a critical factor.

While the competition clearly seems intent on not letting students know that staying in, or west, of Revelstoke will cost them valuable time that could and should be spent in the Rockies while on a Rocky Mountain tour, their efforts to silence us are only serving to draw more attention to this undeniable fact. We are grateful to them for that because, in all likelihood, very few would have seen or noticed our website but thanks to them running around to all of our clients like chickens with their heads cut off, all of our clients are now fully aware of the advantages of Golden. *And, not surprisingly, they could all see through the hypocrisy of this particular outfit complaining about negative advertising.*

*Amazingly, none of our clients are under the impression that Revelstoke is a bad place. They are all fully cognizant that it is simply not as good a choice for the jumping off point on a time limited Rocky Mountain tour. This despite all the antics and carrying-ons of the competition.*

We will continue to do **everything** in our power to educate the students about how important LOCATION, LOCATION, & LOCATION are in picking their once in a lifetime tour and determining which tour is actually offering the best locations for a Rocky Mountain tour and which companies are just running around calling their tour the "Rockies Ultimate Experience".

So Dave, now I ask you, what exactly were you thinking when you decided to cc the BC Minister of Tourism, the BBB and assorted other tourism types? Was it an attempt to intimidate me with all those important people? Was it an attempt to bully me? Am I supposed to be cowering in front of your importance? As Mayor Elect a total 1,458 people voted for you?! Are you kidding me?! I've sent 15 times that number of tourists to Revelstoke over the past decade. My hard work and tireless labour has added millions to the economy of Revelstoke. I've endured years of government bullying before the Liberals came to power and years of unethical and immoral tactics by an unscrupulous competitor. Oh, and for the record, if you want to involve the Hon. Pat Bell in this, we would be delighted. We have been trying to get an independent review of the business practices of the competition for years!

Now Dave, as to the negative impact that this may have on your local tourism – you are correct. **But it is YOUR letter that will have the negative impact.** Not good for a mayors' resume I should think. Especially not in an election year. Since 2000 West Trek has been sending

thousands upon thousands of passengers to stay in Revelstoke. Years ago when we started doing the Full Circuit tour instead of just offering the Southern portion of the route, we moved to Golden as that was clearly the better choice with the added driving time and distances involved with the Full Circuit tour. However, in the winter we only offer the Southern portion of the tour and, as such, have continued to send buses in to Revelstoke during the late fall, winter, and early spring. Depending on the year I would say that 1,000 passengers into Revelstoke area hotels from West Trek every year would be about right. We already have some of our Revelstoke room blocks booked for this upcoming winter. But why am I telling you this? You must already know that from the research, background checks and investigating you did before you attempted to intimidate me with all your cc's.

Each of these passengers stays in a Revelstoke hotel, eats dinner in a Revelstoke restaurant, eats breakfast in Revelstoke or buys it at Coopers to eat later and 98% of them go out to the pubs, sports bars, and night clubs in the evening. I can safely estimate that the total spending between meals, clubs, and hotels is about \$70 per passenger. That means that those 1,000 passengers, and West Trek, spend about \$70,000 a year in Revelstoke. (Note that our spending is spread out between a variety of hotels, pubs, clubs, restaurants, and grocery stores IN Revelstoke; not concentrated in one resort west of town.) I would have to peg the Multiplier Effect in a small, relatively localized economy such as Revelstoke at a multiple of 5 to 6. Take that \$70,000 and apply the Multiplier Effect and you have a contribution to the local economy of somewhere between \$350,000 and \$420,000. All courtesy of West Trek. And that is just in one year.

So Dave. You screwed up. You didn't do your homework. You didn't do any checking at all. Your first contact was an attempt at intimidation and bullying rather than diplomacy. And you decided to cc everybody and his brother.

I take extreme umbrage to you sending the letter and cc'ing everyone before taking any time to research the issue, approach us privately first, read the full intent of the web write up, and particularly that you acted solely on information provided by a bitter competitor. Do you know what happens when you piss off the owner of a business that has put millions and millions of dollars into the local economy over the past decade and stands to inject millions more over the next decade? He goes somewhere else. Again, did you stop and think for even a nano-second before deciding to cc everyone?

I will be calling our hotels personally and speaking to the owners, not the front desk clerks, to explain why we are canceling all of our room blocks for next fall, winter, and spring and all the falls, winters, and springs thereafter. I will let them know that it is because of a letter from you Dave, their elected Mayor, in which you tried to intimidate and bully the advertising efforts of a small businessman without any background or research into the situation. In order to let all the other shop, restaurant, bar and club owners and workers know why our business is suddenly gone I will take out a series of ads in the Revelstoke Times Review explaining that it is because their Mayor, that's you Dave, decided to take part in a battle between a David trying to let the truth be known, and a Goliath trying desperately to keep the truth from it's passengers. And what lucky timing! I will time my ads to coincide with the lead up to November's Municipal Election. Do you plan to run again? Is Mr. MacFarlane running against you again? Anyhow, I will use it to apologize to all the waitresses, chambermaids, hotel staff, restaurant staff, store staff, bar staff and all the others that survive on the service and tourism industry that will see a cut in business in the winter of 2011 - 2012 because of you.

OR, you can write a letter of retraction and apology in which you cc

- The Hon. Pat Bell
- The Better Business Bureau of BC
- Chris Dadson
- Brydon Roe
- Norm Langlois

and inform them that you acted impulsively, hastily, *without doing any research* beyond what was handed to you by a bitter competitor, and may have jumped the gun with your letter and those that were copied on it. And be sure to state clearly that West Trek has, for over a decade, supported Revelstoke by sending you thousands and thousands of tourists. I'm sure that we can then work out some suitable wording to get our message across without insulting your finer sensitivities.

So Dave, how does it feel to be bullied and have someone attempt to intimidate you rather than use diplomacy or just call you and work it out? Sucks right? Before you react without thinking in the future you may want to consider *the source of the complaint*, the options to cc'ing everyone you know, and the best ways to reach an amicable and diplomatic solution.

Today is May 18. I will contact our hotels to cancel our bookings on May 24, 2011 if I have not received a satisfactory response from you. It's up to you. - - - So, what comes first for David Raven, Mayor of Revelstoke? Swallow your pride, admit to jumping the gun, **and save millions of dollars for the local economy in the coming years**. Or not. What you need to understand is that I am so disgusted by the way you jumped to do the bidding of the competition without any thought to the implications or bothering to do the most rudimentary research that it doesn't matter to me. If you hadn't cc'ed all of the above, I wouldn't be requiring this letter and we would be having a m e-mail exchange right now and no doubt making some alterations to the wording. Dave, anything less than an apology for your letter and a retraction is not acceptable.

Oh and Dave, if anyone from your cc intimidation list contacts West Trek Tours about this - the deals off, we move to Golden and I go public with the fact that the Mayor of Revelstoke tried to bully and intimidate a small businessman that was trying to let the truth be known, driving him out of town, rather than attempting diplomacy. As I said, you've pissed me off. Be thankful that, unlike you, I did do my research first. I am letting you off this easily because this is your first term as Mayor and you must still be in a learning curve. If not for that you would be handling calls from hotel owners and the Revelstoke Times Review right now and I would be booking our winter hotel block in Golden.

Finally, speaking of truth and honesty in advertising and business which seems so important to you, why not ask the President of the competition, the one who most likely sent you the letter (and a former employee of West Trek), just how was it that he could set up his company virtually overnight while it took me 7 years of ridiculously long hours, no pay, countless setbacks, and heartache. And how was it that his website was a word for word, photo for photo, copy and paste of my website when he started? Or how did it happen that the email list he used to get started was an address per address exact copy of my client email list, right down to copying two mistakes? The list goes on. As a human being, his answer should disgust you. Given what I've

pointed out about his business tactics, it should not surprise you. This is the person that I have to deal with on a daily basis and it is their tactics that drag others down with them.

I await your letter, but only until May 24.

Jim Noonan,  
Owner, Founder, and President,  
West Trek Tours Inc.