

Coquitlam man stalled on bid for gov't bus-losses aid

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A Coquitlam man who operated his own bus service for 4½ years is making little progress attempts to get government help to repay \$61,000 he claims to be operating losses.

Dieter Meyer, president of Sabina Enterprises Ltd., said Sunday nobody seems to care about himself or his family, although he and his wife alone supplied the bus service to the community.

He said he was forced out of business when B.C. Hydro extended routes into the area last September.

He said that although the route extension was a home-riding election promise made by Premier Barrett, the government didn't notify existing operators let alone attempt to negotiate or offer to phase them out.

Sabina Enterprises owes \$18,000 for eight 24-year-old buses bought from B.C. Hydro and subsequently repaired and \$43,000 for "numerous other bills and expenses," Meyer said.

Meyer, of 850 Lougheed Highway, said he has no hope of recovering his losses in the face of competition from the subsidized Hydro buses, and his financial plight is so serious he has been unable to pay his house mortgage for four months and has been threatened with foreclosure.

The only bright spot was an offer from Vic Parker, B.C. director of transit, who offered to erase the \$18,000 Hydro debt and provide employment for Meyer and his wife.

But Meyer said this offer would still leave him with \$43,000 to pay off, and he could never do this just on a salary.

Meyer's appeal to Barrett brought a reply Dec. 12 that said: "I believe the offer that Mr. Vic Parker has made to you is fair and just."

Meyer's reply to this Dec. 19 was: "Why are we in this distress—only because we sacrificed our lives for the benefit of the general public, because no one else would."

He said in an interview he can obtain no satisfaction from the provincial government or the municipal governments of Coquitlam, Port Coquitlam or Port Moody.

Meyer said he started the bus line in 1969 after service was stopped by Columbia Stage Lines Ltd. He said his intentions was to "provide a service and hopefully break even. I was not after the money. I've always been an idealist. I believe we (in any community) have to cooperate if we're to have any future at all."

He said he lost money trying to provide a service within the area and links to New Westminster and Vancouver.

Meyer said they have a small boy and a baby who had to ride the buses too, and he had to borrow money from banks, credit unions, finance companies and friends.

"We worked 12 to 16 hours per day, never enjoying a holiday, to maintain this service



Dieter Meyer, president Sabina Enterprises Ltd.

until Mr. Barrett took over. By cutting some services gradually we managed to repay some of our liabilities," Meyer said.

He said he then tried to introduce a dial-a-bus system "to which Port Coquitlam had offered \$12,000 to help out. But when Mr. Barrett dropped his bombshell (of Hydro bus routes in the Coquitlam area) . . . it was tragic for us for we lost immediately all advertising contracts as well as the \$12,000 offer."

Mayor Bruce Scott of Port Coquitlam confirmed the offer was withdrawn because of the premier's promise.

Meyer said his family was attempting to provide the same service for 4½ years that the government now is providing, and he doesn't intend to be stuck with any of the losses.

He said he does not intend to go into bankruptcy because "I have a moral obligation" to see that all creditors are paid in full.

to leaders of the other political parties in B.C.

Conservative Leader Scott Wallace replied that he is asking the premier to "reconsider his position" and assist in paying the outstanding debt of \$43,000.

Liberal Leader David Anderson has asked for further details, and Social Credit Leader Bill Bennett has yet to reply, said Meyer.

Mayor Scott said he had "no sympathy" and claimed Meyer "knew exactly what he was getting into, refused to

answer questions when he was setting up his service, and showed a lack of cooperation."

Scott said Meyer refused to provide information regarding schedules or fares, "and said he was running the business, not us." He said it is unlikely that Port Coquitlam will help out.

Mayor Tom Hall of Port Moody said neither he nor council has received any correspondence, so he couldn't comment, and Mayor James Tonn of Coquitlam was unavailable for comment.