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GRAVEL TENDER PROVES COSTLY FOR DISTRICT

North Van's had it's fill of a cheap thing

By LEW THOMAS

The days of bargain gravel are over for the district of North Vancouver.

The district uses as much as 700,000 tons of gravel annually and is presently paying \$1.57 a ton for supplies being brought in from Coquitlam's Pipeline Road pits.

That's a big jump in costs for a municipality that has just ended about 10 years of operating its own major gravel pit at nominal cost factors and got some choice residential land out of it as an added bonus.

Rubbing some salt into the district's economic wound is the fact it might be still enjoying a cut-rate gravel price from a pit it was operating on Greater Vancouver Water Board lands had it not lost the operation to a private bidder.

The district lost the pit, located in the Seymour River valley about six miles north of Second Narrows, when the water board terminated the municipality's exclusive rights to the gravel and called for tenders.

Universal Aggregates Ltd., a Richmond firm, took over the pit about six weeks ago with a bid of 87½ cents a cubic yard. The district, which had been paying 10 cents a yard during the pit's proving up period of nearly two years, made a bid of 25 cents a yard.

"It (the municipality's bid of 25 cents) was a ridiculous tender," admits one municipal official.

GVWB chief engineer Doug MacKay told The Sun the water board was justified in calling for tenders after an

initial agreement with the district for exploratory development.

MacKay said the municipal district had in that time taken out some 100,000 yards of gravel at the 10-cent rate.

He said that prior to the GVWB decision to call for tenders no satisfactory offer had been made by North Vancouver district to replace the exploratory charge.

The municipality went into the gravel business in a big way some 10 years ago in the Lillooet Road area, north of the Coach House motor inn.

A planned program of gravel removal, now petering out, saved the municipality more than \$1 million in construction costs and terraced the Lillooet Road area for multi-million dollar apartment and town-house projects.

Municipal Manager Doug Welsh said the search continues for other gravel deposits in the municipality.

The district employs a university geology student during the summer months to check possible gravel deposits. It was such a student, according to Welsh and municipal engineer Tom Gardner, who



DOUG WELSH

... gravel search on

turned up the GVWB's Seymour deposits two years ago.

Universal Aggregates general manager Wayne Douglas estimates there are more than 2 million yards of gravel in the GVWB area pit.

GVWB should net close to \$400,000 from its initial agreement with Universal. It re-

quires the firm to take out some 450,000 yards of gravel within three years.

Based on the 87½ cents per yard (a yard of gravel roughly equals 1½ tons) rate GVWB should net an ultimate profit of \$1.75 million from the pit's total resources.

District council meanwhile, acting on the recommendations of Welsh and Gardner, rejected three tenders for supplying the district's 1972 (balance of year), 1973 and 1974 gravel needs.

Welsh said after a council policy committee meeting rejected tenders from Universal, Construction Aggregates, and Jack Cewe Construction Ltd., that plans for establishing the district's own gravel stockpiling dock near Second Narrows will mean a greater number of firms will be able to tender.

The bids thrown out varied in basic and premium gravel prices for different quantities. Base rates for pit-run gravel ranged from \$1.36 per ton to \$1.49.

All bids were based on water transport (barging) of the gravel to waterfront stockpile locations.

The district estimates it will need close to two million tons of gravel aggregates between now and the end of 1974.

"Just a 10-cent reduction would thus save us \$200,000. That's a lot of money," said Welsh.

Plans for barging the municipality's gravel supplies will be good news for residents of Lillooet Road, whose complaints about gravel trucks thundering past their homes brought the district's gravel-supply problem to the fore two weeks ago.

Some 200 trucks use Lillooet Road daily. At least half of them went up the road taking gravel to a municipal stockpile from Coquitlam sources.

Municipal trucks going down Lillooet, taking loads from the stockpile to various projects in the district, doubled the noise.

The municipal gravel traffic will be off Lillooet if and when the district establishes its waterfront stockpile base, but the Universal company vehicles will be moving gravel from the GVWB pit for the next three years.

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