



And the band played on...

I first heard the name ‘Donald K. Donald’ (DKD) in the ’70s when I was running around my hometown of Summerside, Prince Edward Island. Back then, it was in association with the band April Wine (DKD was the “promoter”). He seemed like the big times to us, routinely packing the local high school gyms and arenas with great bands. I thought that DKD must have managed security too, as we routinely got tossed out when we had too many pops.

Turns out, there was no Mr. Donald. DKD is a company run by a Donald K. Tarlton who went on to receive the Order of Canada and a Juno for special achievement in the music industry. In a very tough industry, DKD has produced thousands of venues and most recently announced a U2 concert for Moncton with an anticipated crowd of 120,000 people.

Not so long ago, the City of Summerside decided that they had the skill set to be a promoter in these big leagues. In August

2008 they anointed their new \$44-million “wellness centre” with an almost sold out Kenny Rogers concert but missed the mark with Loverboy when they only sold 200 tickets and had to cancel the show. Not to be foiled, in May 2009 they brought in John Fogerty with the help of StarLink Productions LLC (owned by Katrina Berg Sussmeier) to a crowd of 3,300, thus setting the stage for a 2010 concert that would be the envy of the region.

Yes, you guessed it, it was none other than the “Official Michael Jackson Tribute Show” and the city’s chance to “moonwalk” all the way to the bank. A business plan was prepared and council — with the help of Ms. Sussmeier of Los Angeles — set out to star glaze us with promises of Beyoncé, Usher, Ne-Yo and Leona Lewis. What unfolded is an entertainment show unto itself.

In reviewing StarLink’s website, you don’t have to be brilliant to figure out that Ms. Sussmeier and her three companion Cairn

terriers (Trevor, Robbie & Fiona) who “are standing by to handle any emergency for you” don’t measure up to DKD’s standard. I could easily be funny and sarcastic at this point, but unfortunately for taxpayers the plan went too far astray in a seriously sad fashion.

The City of Summerside has now filed a legal action in California against StarLink and Sussmeier. In short, the City’s lawyer says: “On or around July 31, 2009, the City made an initial wire payment of \$650,000 (cdn) to StarLink” as a deposit, so Beyoncé’s appearance would be, to quote Sussmeier, “guaranteed.”

Nearly a year later with no concert in sight, Sussmeier sent an email demand for more money: “This is seriously hurting Summerside’s reputation in the big leagues. These guys don’t kid around, this isn’t a game. I’m trying to bring you a huge show and bring you in to the big leagues, but I won’t bring you another show if you can’t conduct business at this level.”

With that said and not much else, in March 2010 the city made another wire transfer of \$650,000 to StarLink. At this point the City was out about \$1,369,000 and still no concert.

Here’s a direct quote from Summerside’s claim: “In reality, however, the ‘Michael Jackson Tribute Show’ was, from start to finish, an elaborate fraud. No such concert existed. Beyoncé, Fergie from the Black-Eyed-Peas, Ne-Yo and Leona Lewis had not agreed or ever committed to appear at any concert in Prince Edward Island in the summer of 2010...”

The really sad part of this whole ordeal is that Summerside taxpayers went to the polls on November 1, 2010. According to a recent CBC report, just days before the election, Mayor Basil Stewart insisted that a major concert was still on for Summerside — even though the city had been trying to get its money back since April 2010.

It’s time someone ordered the provincial auditor to do a sweeping investigation into how this whole affair took place. Where was the due diligence? If this turns out to be a scam, heads should roll, starting from the top.

Now we all know why DKD gets paid the big bucks — it’s because he delivers the goods. If you want to play in the big leagues, then don’t set out with a little league team. | ABM

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