



City tendering process in question

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CTV News has obtained details on just how many contracts the city is handing out without tendering, and the amount is staggering: nearly \$1-billion in the last five years.

Since 2004, the city has given 166 construction projects of over \$500,000 to companies without taking any other bids.

Similarly, a total of 330 consulting projects of over \$100,000 have been given out without competition.

The documents cover a span of five years: from January 1st 2005 to December 31st 2009.

They show that during that time, the city awarded almost \$800-million worth of construction contracts without going through an open tendering process.

The city also single sourced nearing \$89-million worth of consulting contracts.

Ward 13 Alderman Diane Colley-Urquhart says the city should be putting out as much work as possible to tender, and she says the city is spending too much taxpayer money on consultants.

"The culture down here at City Hall is if we don't have enough staff here to do things, we'll just hire a bunch of consultants to do the work for us and probably pay three times as much," said Colley-Urquhart.

The non-tendered contracts involve a wide variety of work and services, from building the west leg of LRT and designing schools, to hiring public relations experts and law firms for special projects.

Certain projects stand out: we now know that a single source, designer Santiago Calatrava, was paid \$3,337,600 to design the Peace Bridge.

Other single source contracts include \$40-million to the Canadian Corps of Commissioners for parking control services.

A company called Paradox Inc. was paid \$106,000 to clarify the role of the Calgary Heritage Authority.

The University of Alberta was paid \$173,000 for a research project called the Index of Well-Being.

A spokesperson for the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, Richard Truscott, says most of the contracts could have been put out to tender.

"We need to look at new ways to do business, new ways of delivering servicing to residents and businesses in the city, and that means opening up in large part, opening up these processes to competitive bids," said Truscott.

The mayor says it isn't practical to allow a bid on every contract. Dave Bronconnier says in some cases, companies hold a patent on technology the city needs. In others, the mayor says it just makes sense to have a company that has already done work for the city on one project perform similar work on the next one that comes along.

CTV News took a closer look at such case: Dr. Anthony Lynch has received nearly \$900,000 from the Calgary Fire Department. Dr. Lynch is the contracted physician at the Calgary Fire Department Wellness Centre. Dr. Lynch has been working with the city since 1999 and the Fire Chief says his expertise is needed at the centre. He also says changing doctors would be disruptive to patients.

We are going to hear more about tendering and the hiring of consultants over the next couple of months.

Mayorality candidates say they'll be adding both topics to the list of election issues.

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