



City review of Calatrava bridge likely to criticize process behind \$24.5M project

Kim Guttormson, Calgary Herald: Monday, May 17, 2010



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An audit report to be released today is expected to find that the Calatrava pedestrian bridge should have gone to a design competition rather than being handed to the international architect.

However, there was no policy in place specifying it couldn't be sole-sourced, sources say.

The report reviews about 100 city purchases as part of a larger audit of city procurement policies, with the controversial \$24.5-million bridge over the Bow River the

most well-known case.

Conclusions from the audit's first phase, released last fall, found there wasn't a comprehensive policy guiding city purchasing decisions across the corporation.

In the second report, the auditor looked at individual examples to see whether policy existed and whether it was followed.

The report indicates the pedestrian bridge should have gone to a design competition because the Centre City plan, a planning blueprint, recommends all major downtown infrastructure be the result of public bids. Santiago Calatrava was hired to design the bridge for \$2.6 million, including the engineering work. The contracts to build it all went to tender.

Ald. Diane Colley-Urquhart, a critic of the bridge and the fact it was sole-sourced, said the audit's second phase — which she hadn't seen Thursday — should get into the "nuts and bolts of what we need to improve. The second phase is going to be the meat of where the problems have been."

The second phase, said Ald. Brian Pincott, will likely "identify processes that weren't in place."

While still compiling the second phase of the report, auditor Tracy McTaggart said what its authors were seeing was "consistent with an absence of rules."

Pincott, who also hadn't seen the audit Thursday, pointed out city staff have already started to address concerns raised in the first phase.

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"It's the only responsible thing for administration to do," he said.

Eric Sawyer, chief financial officer, said the city began working on a new set of procurement policies in 2008. They include bringing in an external adviser, because the "framework was out of date."

"We weren't operating under a central, single set of rules."

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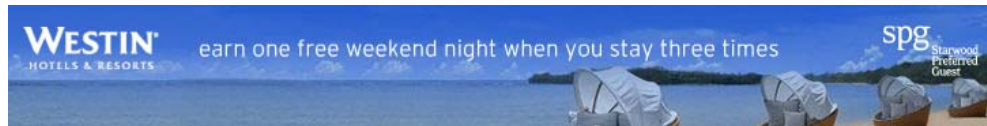
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