

Latouche: Council leans on flawed concepts



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We all have flaws of some kind or another — after all we are human.

However, at city hall, it does not seem to be that way, despite the fact that more often than not, many council policies have been found to be supported by erroneous or dubious parameters.

Calgarians faced a “real” 10% tax hike for 2011 arrived at by flawed assumptions and concepts.

Since its inception, the Institute for Public Sector Accountability (IPSA) has maintained the budget process was flawed.

One, because it uses a concocted index called the Municipal Price Index (MPI) to determine its basis for tax increases.

The MPI is flawed because it uses internal factors which are heavily weighted by wages which make up 60% of the operating costs.

As wages go up, it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy that the index increases, hence your taxes increase.

Furthermore, this concept is supported by the former and current CFO. The latter even wrote a letter to the media stating the index was computed by the Conference Board of Canada — not true, as IPSA found out.

This year’s taxes are based on city surveys which stated Calgarians wanted their services.

Council learned Monday many of those surveyed were either children and members of the city staff, a survey for which Calgarians paid \$900,000.

The survey never asked what services should be cut, or at least provided with an alternative means to offer ways to save money.

It seems council is not aware a poll done in 2010 by Forum Research Inc. found only 25% of Canadians were satisfied with services in their municipalities.

Don’t worry, as the mayor explained, all will be well when they start using “zero-base service reviews” to prepare for future budgets.

Once again, another flawed concept, which will have Calgarians pay a consultant to support its implementation.

In addition to these bogus concepts, reports and surveys, council will add another dealing with food we consume.

As if council did not have enough on its plate, we are now going to have our local government determine how and from where we should get our food.

There is a growing movement for the local sourcing of food. It is OK to promote community gardens, but to spend time looking at what we can consume is far removed from the role of municipalities which are constantly complaining they lack the money to deliver services.

This is another attempt towards social engineering, pushed by the same people who want chicken farms in city backyards.

Among all these flaws, the most pronounced one is the methodology used to give council members a raise.

Although recommended by an independent committee, IPSA believes the amount is excessive and will impact future union negotiations which will further impact the MPI and hence your taxes.

Our suspicions have been confirmed as Statistics Canada, which produces the numbers for the average weekly earnings for Alberta workers, explicitly warns that these numbers shouldn't be used, because they are not designed to decide pay raises.

Welcome to the new age of transparency at city hall.

In the past, Ald. Rick McIver — aka Dr. No — was vilified.

Today, in a more tepid manner, both Ald. Diane Colley-Urquhart and Ald. Andre Chabot protest, but with no significant result.

Calgary is often reported to have more highly educated residents per capita than most Canadian cities.

If this is the case, when are Calgarians going to start questioning the many flawed precepts used to tax us.

Or better yet, question the flawed council that pulls the wool over our eyes.

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