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Alderman says layoff plan needs to be developed now

By [SHAWN LOGAN](#), SUN MEDIA

Calls by city administration to dig in for an expected economic storm has one alderman suggesting the city go even further and prepare a plan for future layoffs.

The Sun revealed yesterday that Calgary's top administrator, Owen Tobert, has put city hall on notice that grants from other orders of government could wither, forcing a reconsideration of projects, hiring and discretionary spending to deal with any shortfalls.

But Ald. Diane Colley-Urquhart said while she's happy city brass is finally taking dire predictions about tough fiscal times ahead seriously, there needs to be a sharper game plan ready to be rolled out if the economy continues to sag.

"When you consider that 65% of our operating budget is tied up in salaries, benefits and wages, that's where we'll make a big difference," she said.

While Tobert's memo suggested a hiring freeze may be one solution to forecasted economic woes, Colley-Urquhart said the city needs to develop a plan now, even if it's never used.

Mayor Dave Bronconnier said too little is known about future impacts on the city's bottom line to make any firm plans but the current realities should ensure judicious use of the taxpayers' purse.

"Influences beyond our control -- that is, two other orders of government -- may have impacts on the city's budget, which means that will trickle down to staffing levels and projects," he said.

"We're not trying to panic or getting our staff to panic -- we want people to always look at their expenditures and be prepared for changes that happen."

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