

# Mayor rebuked for budget remarks

## Nenshi told to treat fellow councillors as part of a team

BY JASON MARKUSOFF AND RICHARD CUTHBERTSON, CALGARY HERALD NOVEMBER 25, 2011

Presented By:



Mayor Naheed Nenshi's inflammatory remarks about aldermen's budget moves may not be dampening the jovial mood on his council - but nor are they part of what he promised to bring to politics, warned the man Nenshi said would be his mayoral mentor.

While Ald. Diane ColleyUrquhart rebuked the mayor in council for saying she and others treated "taxpayers like an ATM" - he retorted that she could mind her manners, too - Wayne Stewart told the Herald that Nenshi should be more gracious and more respectful after losing some city council spending votes this week.

"I don't even think (his comments) reflect reality, and I think it was just a reaction," said Stewart, a former Calgary Homeless Foundation executive who ran for mayor against Nenshi and then dropped out to endorse him.

"You've got to take your lumps as well as your successes."

The two used to have offices across the hall at Mount Royal University's business school, where Stewart still teaches.

When Stewart endorsed Nenshi, the would-be mayor said he would rely on his elder colleague as a mentor.

Stewart said he has told Nenshi to be more diplomatic.

"The first thing he said (after winning) was he was going to bring the council together, and this just shows he hasn't done that yet," Stewart said.

"In any team game - and council is a team game - you've got to respect other members of your team."

Day 4 of budget hearings opened with next year's tax hike at 5.9 per cent, above the five per cent that Nenshi has made his mission to preserve.

Before department approvals began Thursday, ColleyUrquhart said the mayor's bank-machine smear was "disparaging," "dishonest" and "disrespectful."

"I have more respect for the public office, for the elected office, than to treat Calgarians as though they are an ATM machine," she said.

Colley-Urquhart, a veteran participant in the barbs and bitterness of previous mayor Dave Bronconnier's council, asked for no apology.

Far from seeming cowed, Nenshi shot back with accusations of his own, accusing Colley-Urquhart of calling him "petulant" on Twitter.

She explained that was her view of his recent interruption-laden spat with two other aldermen who demanded answers on the airport tunnel file, one of Nenshi's hardestwon, narrowest and priciest rookieyear victories.

It had all the appearances of a schoolyard squabble. But it quickly ended, and council members returned to their normal mode - dry debates about budget line items on information technology or affordable housing, interspersed with cheeky jokes about Nenshi's hair, Ald. Gord Lowe's age or Ald. John Mar's height. "It's not a rift. It's not even theatrics," said Lowe, who has led the charge to raise taxes to stave off service clawbacks.

"It's just political fact. Each one of us has different political agendas."

By midday, Nenshi had united his council against a common enemy: the Harper government and its refusal of a grant for recreation centres.

He continued to downplay any effect his comments had. "The soap opera of all this is fun, but nobody cares. I really, really hope that there are not Calgarians going, 'Oh my God, does Ald. Colley-Urquhart still like Mayor Nenshi?' "

Ald. Shane Keating, a casual observer of the verbal poop-flinging, said colleagues have "crossed the line," and they will hopefully stop.

"In many cases, there are members of council who have said things they shouldn't have for the last couple of months. I think this has brought it to a head."

Nenshi disliked that council outvoted him to add to the police and social service budgets. But he said it was Ald. Druh Farrell's failed - and admittedly clumsy - pitch to spend \$4 million more for street tree upkeep that Nenshi said sparked his "ATM" comment.

Farrell, used to having former alderman Ric McIver and other conservatives take shots at her, said she won't be "bullied" and will keep espousing her views. She believes the Nenshi council is far more collegial, but isn't impressed by the mayor's attack.

"It reduces the debate to a partisan level and it's unnecessary, and I thought we'd gotten away from

that," said Farrell.

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